



CONVENTION WORKBOOK

Reports and Overtures • 2016



66th REGULAR CONVENTION
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Milwaukee, Wis.
July 9-14, 2016

Name of delegate _____

Home address _____

Convention address _____

For reporting errors in registration listings, see last page of this *Convention Workbook*.

For ongoing convention information, see www.lcms.org/convention.

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

Preface

If you are a repeat delegate to LCMS conventions, you may recognize a new look to this *Convention Workbook* and its accompanying *Biographical Synopses and Statements of Nominees* booklet. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of the LCMS President's Office, Communications Department, and Secretary's Office, changes in format and layout should make your preparations for your attendance at this 66th Regular Convention of our Synod a little easier.

The booklet *Biographical Synopses and Statements of Nominees* contains the information you will need to prepare for the many elections that will take place at the convention. It is larger than in the past, due in part to change of layout, which places all information regarding all candidates for a given election in one place for ready reference. In addition, it contains a list of all nominees for all elections handled by the Committee for Convention Nominations (referred to as the "pool") for your use, should you wish to make a nomination from the floor of the convention. And it contains a second list of those nominees submitted by congregations for regional board positions (referred to as "outside the pool") who have indicated a willingness to be considered for Concordia University System positions. (For more information regarding these lists and their use, see the Preface page to the *Biographical* booklet.)

This *Convention Workbook* has also undergone some change to make it more user friendly, primarily by relocating and expanding its table of contents to provide easier reference to its primary content: reports and overtures. Other than elections, these reports and overtures are the entirety of the business to come before the convention. They will be addressed by one or more of the convention's 18 floor committees, with proposed resolutions that will be printed in the pre-convention and daily issues of *Today's Business*.

The floor committees will be meeting in St. Louis over Memorial Day Weekend, May 27–30, 2016. Between now and that weekend, any member of the Synod (congregation, commissioned minister, or ordained minister) or any lay delegate may offer comment to any of the floor committees regarding the content of reports and overtures by sending a signed letter to me at this address: Office of the Secretary, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122. Such letters must be sent at least nine weeks prior to the convention (May 7, 2016) to allow time for forwarding to the chairman of the appropriate floor committee.

May God bless our coming together for our Synod's convention on July 9–14, 2016. May it be a good and productive time for each of us and our Synod as we join our efforts to do the work of His Church upon whose Rock it and our hope is built.

Secretary Raymond L. Hartwig, *Editor*

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2016 Biographical Synopses and Statements of Nominees

REGISTERED DELEGATES AND REPRESENTATIVES

A. Voting and Advisory Delegates

Atlantic District

Voting Ordained

Albrechtsen, Henry, III; 135 Elm St, Schenectady, NY 12304
Fleischmann, John George, II; 119 Ocean Ave, Ctr Moriches, NY 11934-3421
Hodges, Jonathan E; 97 Graham Ave, Hudson, NY 12534-2603
Hollmann, Joshua David; 3338 75th St, Jackson Hts, NY 11372-1143
Lee, Donald W; 21 Still Rd, Monroe, NY 10950-4107
Noack, Brian B; 45 Greene Ave, Sayville, NY 11782-2722
Rapp, Victor John; 95 Sunrise Ln, Levittown, NY 11756-4407
Taber, Jason Alan; 197 Maujer St, Brooklyn, NY 11206
Taylor, Dien Ashley; 4360 Boyd Ave, Bronx, NY 10466-1804
Wiegand, Adam C; 10 Judys Way, Saratoga Spgs, NY 12866-5481

Voting Lay

Albrechtsen, Pearl A; 136 Elm St, Schenectady, NY 12304-1204
Bailey, Eunice; 157-19 10 Ave, Whitestone, NY 11357
Bell, Karyn; 97 Canterbury Dr, Wading River, NY 11792
Bhagwatprasad, Deochand; 82 Richmond St, Brooklyn, NY 11208-1323
Funfgeld, Kathleen E; 31 Caumsett Woods Ln, Woodbury, NY 11797-1245
Graybosch, Deborah C; 130 Pawnee St, Ronkonkoma, NY 11779-4625
Hanson, Jean; 10 Normandy Rd, Bronxville, NY 10708-4808
Olson, Linda Y; 8 Robin Ln, Hyde Park, NY 12538-2934
Smith, Susan; 181 Vanamburgh Rd, Montgomery, NY 12549
Wilson, Jessy J; 638 Elm Ave, Selkirk, NY 12158-1206

Advisory Ordained

Zwernemann, James C; PO Box 513, East Haddam, CT 06423-0513

Advisory Commissioned

Rojas, Raquel A; 4360 Theodore Wittrock Cir, Bronx, NY 10466

California/Nevada/Hawaii District

Voting Ordained

Adams, Ricky L; 205 Tennessee Valley Rd, Mill Valley, CA 94941-3601
Becker, Stephen Heinrich; 475 Florin Rd, Sacramento, CA 95831
Carney, William M; 1048 Kaupaku Pl, Honolulu, HI 96825-1302
Crown, Stewart D; 1230 Fulton St, Palo Alto, CA 94301-3316
Dubke, Dallas D; 22865 Tuscan Ave, Red Bluff, CA 96080-8851
Durham, Dennis J; 1915 Woodsage Way, Santa Rosa, CA 95404
Eisberg, Clarence H; 3856 N Gardner Ave, Merced, CA 95340-9344
Johnson, Benjamin Carl; 4661 Piper St, Fremont, CA 94538-2519
Kliwer, Mark A; 3205 N Highland Dr, Winnemucca, NV 89445-3905
Reese, David Allen; 1 Encina Pl, Pittsburg, CA 94565-6548
Rowe, Daniel; 2102 Summit Dr, Paso Robles, CA 93446-1827
Schaaf, Kent R; 139 Saint Johns Dr, Grass Valley, CA 95945-5533
Schlensker, Daniel A; PO Box 222, Wofford Hts, CA 93285-0222
Schuller, Isaac Simon; 124 Basch Ave, San Jose, CA 95116-1313
Waetzig, Calvin L; 1460 Divine Ln, Tracy, CA 95376-4459

Voting Lay

Abbott, William A; 135 Comstock Rd, Dayton, NV 89403
Byrd, Otis L; 176 Nueva Ave, San Francisco, CA 94134-2421
Combs, Walter; 2640 W Sedona Ave, Visalia, CA 93291
Duncan, Dianna L; 408 E Prune Ave #B, Lompoc, CA 93436-4510
Guise, Lynne; 9516 Sandpoint Dr, San Ramon, CA 94583
Hack Broome, Carol A; 2797 Park Ave Ste 204, Santa Clara, CA 95050-6064
Hayhurst, Tom; 6501 Butterfield Way, Placerville, CA 95667-8796
Johnston, Robert M; 232 Columbia Dr, Vacaville, CA 95687-5180
Kramer, Timothy J; 23 Ravenwood Ln, Napa, CA 94558-6729
Lee, Scot F; PO Box 8, Greenview, CA 96037-0008
Madding, David; 12303 Valentano Ave, Bakersfield, CA 93312
Maxner, Marilyn A; 1670 Via Casoli, Monterey, CA 93940-6409

Schimke, Jeff; 1385 Hidden Springs Ct, McKinleyville, CA 95519-4382
Schultz, David; 19353 Royal Ave, Hayward, CA 94541-3647
Wallace, David R; 16 Soderstrom Ln, Turlock, CA 95380-5023

Advisory Ordained

Kabel, James A; 911 St Andrews Way, Eagle Point, OR 97524-9028

Advisory Commissioned

Eitel, Sandra Faune; 1111 S Conyer St, Visalia, CA 93277-2537
Mancini, Michael John; 446 Jeter St, Redwood City, CA 94062-2059
Schumacher, Jacob W; 871 Meadow Vista Dr, Carson City, NV 89705-6865
Spurgeon, David; 2893 Shotwick Trl, Redding, CA 96002-1857

Central Illinois District

Voting Ordained

Bishop, Daniel J; 711 Court St, Pekin, IL 61554
Boehne, Jonathan Paul; 595 W 3rd St, El Paso, IL 61738-1006
Braaten, Jason M; 706 E Northline Rd, Tuscola, IL 61953-1106
Bruer, Robert L; 3070 E Lynnwood Dr, Decatur, IL 62521-4567
Cunningham, Kirk Robert; 101 E Morgan St Box 347, Clayton, IL 62324-1525
Eckhardt, Burnell F; 440 S Vine St, Kewanee, IL 61443
Elliott, Mark R; C/o St John Lutheran Church, 509 S Mattis Ave, Champaign, IL 61821-3630
Evenson, Douglas A; 1212 S State St, Beardstown, IL 62618-2042
Gillet, Stephen Paul; 13234 N 2300th St, Wheeler, IL 62479-3007
Hahn, Timothy R; 306 S 4th St, Cissna Park, IL 60924-9603
Michel, Gregory S; 509 Bruce Ave, Milan, IL 61264-3358
Newell, William James; 801 S Madison St, Bloomington, IL 61701-6464
O'Brien, Terrence Eugene; 2343 E 200 North Rd, Pana, IL 62557-6008
Speers, David R; 5088 E 1400th Ave, Altamont, IL 62411-2836
Spilker, Gaylord J; PO Box 259, Edinburg, IL 62531-0259
Thompson, Mark A; 205 Pulaski St, Lincoln, IL 62656-2037
Traxel, Joshua Thomas; 79 Bellerive Rd, Springfield, IL 62704-6800

Voting Lay

Blakeley, Scott H; 15177 100 North Ave, Bradford, IL 61421-9551
Block, Kevin E; 406 Sycamore Ln, Allerton, IL 61810
Bray, Frederick J; 11200 N Southridge Ct, Effingham, IL 62401-5628
Breitenfeld, Scot; 3111 S Myra Ridge Dr, Urbana, IL 61802-7063
Casebeer, John; 1644 W Harrison Ave, Decatur, IL 62526-3439
Dawson, Brian E; 5 Shiloh Ct, Jacksonville, IL 62650
Freeman, Donald C; 8873 N 1900th Ave, Geneseo, IL 61254-8942
Hutchings, Dennis E; 3a Chad Ave, Sullivan, IL 61951-9484
Lientz, David A; 2533 Delaware Dr, Springfield, IL 62702-1211
Mahler, Theodore W; 7501 Deer Run Rd, Pleasant Plns, IL 62677
Meyer, Roger A; 523 W Northgate Rd, Peoria, IL 61614-2041
Murphree, Nathan D; PO Box 72, Saint Peter, IL 62880
Parry, Steve; 1226 Kenneth Dr, Bloomington, IL 61704
Peirce, Bernard L; 1203 N Nofsinger Rd, Metamora, IL 61548
Roos, Michael H; 13809 E Enion Rd, Havana, IL 62644-4516
Troxel, Marc; 436 S Dudley, Macomb, IL 61455

Advisory Ordained

Reimnitz, Wesley E; 19 Guilford Dr, Springfield, IL 62711-8013

Advisory Commissioned

Dixon, Joshua A W; 3024 S Lincoln Ave, Springfield, IL 62704-4952
Milas, Martha Jane; 1109 Foothill Dr, Champaign, IL 61821-5620

Eastern District

Voting Ordained

Andrae, Eric R; 1405 N Egle Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Bahr, Benjamin G; 2660 New Rd, Ransomville, NY 14131-9648
Bode, Christian Daniel; C/o St John Luth Church, 1107 Lake Road W Frk, Hamlin, NY 14464-9601
Boymah, William Y; 637 N 67th St, Philadelphia, PA 19151-3613

Brindle, Murray W; 34 Mason Rd, Tunkhannock, PA 18657-7130
Grubbs, Travis S; 40 S Chapel St, Gowanda, NY 14070-1304
Krueger, Dennis J; C/o Trinity Lutheran Church, 146 Reserve Rd, West Seneca, NY 14224-4016
Schian, Aaron Thomas; 3917 Waverly Rd, Owego, NY 13827-2841
Vogeler, Richard Peter; 3229 Upper Mountain Rd, Sanborn, NY 14132-9104
Walters, Sean Gregory; 1302 E Washington St, New Castle, PA 16101-4416
Weidmayer, Robert; 153 Church Ave, Farmington, NY 14425
Werk, Allen A; 24 Park Ave, Batavia, NY 14020-2023

Voting Lay

Brown, Ellen; 41 Coneflower Dr, W Henrietta, NY 14586-9341
Capozzi, Erica; 34 Milford Crossing, Penfield, NY 14526
Forth, Thomas E; 7 Mount Airy Dr, Orchard Park, NY 14127-3564
Gerdes, Kirk; 538 Valley Rd, Morgantown, WV 26505
Heintz, Frederick W, Jr; 200 Delaware Dr, Glenshaw, PA 15116-1716
Keefe, Jeffery P; 107 Scott St, Tonawanda, NY 14150-3428
Poellet, Daniel; 13 Grove St, Tully, NY 13159
Richardson, Michael F; 1100 New Chestnut St, Bristol, PA 19007-2826
Steiner, David R; 8304 Cole Rd, Colden, NY 14033-9742
Struckmann, Paul-Joseph; 121 Greenfield St, Lower Rear Apt, Buffalo, NY 14214
Ziegler, Joan R; 183 E Windsor Rd, Saylorsburg, PA 18353
Ziezula, Charmayne C; 6879 E Eden Rd, Hamburg, NY 14075

Advisory Ordained

Jacobi, Frederick C; 85 Independence Dr, Orchard Park, NY 14127-3424

Advisory Commissioned

Mc Guan, Sharon; 73 Dorchester Rd, Buffalo, NY 14222-1147

English District

Voting Ordained

Alles, Stephen C; 544 Isabella St, Pembroke, ON K8A 5V2
CANADA
Erhardt, Martin K; 407 Nassau St, Princeton, NJ 08540-4647
Grams, Daniel E; 4108 Greensboro Dr, Troy, MI 48085-3615
Huenink, James Edward; C/o Concordia Lutheran Church, 3144 Home Ave, Berwyn, IL 60402-2910
Laughridge, Justin D; 10380 Londonderry Ave, San Diego, CA 92126-3356
Murray, Daniel Patrick; 215 Carson Dr, Westland, MI 48185-9656
Myers, Cashius R; 6428 Carnation Ct, Mt Pleasant, WI 53406-5293
Roegner, Robert M; 415 Country Downs Dr, Lake St Louis, MO 63367-4310
Sanders, Thomas J; 424 S Pine Ave, Arlington Hts, IL 60005-2056
Thelen, James E; C/o Ascension Lutheran Church, 1220 W Magee Rd, Tucson, AZ 85704-3325
Touten, Chad D; 2435 Engle Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46809
Webb, Jeffrey N; 724 N Edenbridge Way, St Augustine, FL 32092-5026
Weldon, Robert F, Sr; 137 Harvard Ave, Elyria, OH 44035-6039
Westgate, Brian P; 125 5th Ave Apt 2, Butler, PA 16001-7613
Yohannes, Zerhaimanot Zerit; 858 Ramblewood Dr, East Lansing, MI 48823-1335

Voting Lay

Coffey, Michael A; 17 Grant Ave, White Plains, NY 10603-3607
Demerling, June; 239 Maple Ct, Box 1255, Mitchell ON N0K 1N0
CANADA
English, Mark A; 7272 Pine Woods Way, Olmsted Township, OH 44138
Farquharson, Ian C; 71 Huntsmill Blvd, Toronto, ON M1W 2Z8
CANADA
George, Carol H; 1903 W 8th St Pmb 124, Erie, PA 16505-4936
Glenn, Ellory W; 226 Hereford Ave, Ferguson, MO 63135
Grad, Roni; 6593 N Calle Sin Nombre, Tucson, AZ 85718
Hill, Jason; 4010 W 150th St, Midlothian, IL 60445
Johnson, Cliff T; 6960 Balcom Ave, Reseda, CA 91335-4803
Lagemann, Paul W; 407 Arcadia Ct, Fort Wayne, IN 46807-2003
Morr, Justin P; 2151 Cumberland Pkwy SE Apt 914, Atlanta, GA 30339

Paavola, Noel E; 1636 Blairmoor Ct, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI 48236
 Porter, Charles J; 7946 S. North Cape Rd., Franklin, WI 53132
 Silvey, Dian L; 444 Abbot Rd. East Lansing, MI 48823-3321
 Van Ewyk, James J; 404 S Ardmore Ave, Villa Park, IL 60181-2926

Advisory Commissioned

Morrison, Jeri; 555 S La Canada Dr, Green Valley, AZ 85614-2538

Florida-Georgia District

Voting Ordained

Burtzlauff, Paul S; 301 58th St S, St Petersburg, FL 33707
 Carretto, Stephen Paul; 744 SW 7th St, Boca Raton, FL 33486-5506
 Ellsworth, Adam G; 808 Marstevan Dr NE, Atlanta, GA 30306
 Hageman, Michael Scott; 2914 Huntington Ln, Rockledge, FL 32955-8122
 Heyliger, Wilton Eric; 530 Dalrymple Rd, Sandy Spgs, GA 30328-1324
 Maulella, Robert J; 713 Golfside Ln, Sebring, FL 33870-6351
 Meseke, Paul R; 1752 Larkin Rd, Spring Hill, FL 34608-6458
 Michael, Gregory C; 140 Rock and Shoals Dr, Athens, GA 30605-4616
 Narring, Dana A; 3795 Countryside Rd, Sarasota, FL 34233-2125
 Pfeffer, Dean R; 2001 N Park Rd, Plant City, FL 33563-2038
 Reynolds, Stephen; 3600 Oaks Clubhouse Dr Apt 502, Pompano Beach, FL 33069-3697
 Rivera, Wilfredo C, Sr; 30124 SW 159th Ct, Homestead, FL 33033-3483
 Rockey, James H; 10505 SE 42nd Ct, Belleview, FL 34420-6871
 Rojas, Roberto E, Jr; 10319 Moore Rd, Gotha, FL 34734-4704
 Schwartz, Roger A; 464 Cambridge Way, Martinez, GA 30907-8941
 Von Werder, Paul William; 11165 Sylvan Pond Cir, Orlando, FL 32825-5766
 Wiggins, James, Jr; 2730 Edgewood Ave W, Jacksonville, FL 32209-2315
 Winters, Jay Allen; 2207 Monticello Rd, Tallahassee, FL 32303-4743
 Yoakum, Kevin Lee; 11421 Big Bend Rd, Riverview, FL 33579-7171

Voting Lay

Albright, Jeffrey; 25141 Albia Ave, Mount Plymouth, FL 32776
 Anderson, Fred R; 918 Alberto St NE, Palm Bay, FL 32905
 Borgstede, Erich W; 1110 3rd St S, St Petersburg, FL 33701-5517
 Boyd, Richard A; 1528 Copperfield Cir, Tallahassee, FL 32312-3762
 Cioper, Thomas A; 14442 Reflection Lakes Dr, Fort Myers, FL 33907-1806
 Douthitt, Jesse F; 4823 Juliana Reserve Dr, Auburndale, FL 33823
 Frerking, Steven R; 1019 Avery Creek Dr, Woodstock, GA 30188
 Grant, Harry B, Jr; 1225 S Highland Ave Apt 101, Clearwater, FL 33756-4386
 Harrison, Jean A; 1045 Winter Green St, Lake Placid, FL 34966
 Leggett, James; 30 NE 96th St, Miami Shores, FL 33138-2724
 Losey, Donald G; 10831 Majuro Dr, Jacksonville, FL 32246
 Muetzel, Michael P; 10410 Maerlin Dr, New Port Richey, FL 34654
 Nimmo, Steve; 178 Northwoods Dr, Mount Airy, GA 30563-2255
 Polzin, Mark F; 1810 Bottlebrush Way, North Port, FL 34289-2306
 Ringer, David A; 463 Old Phoenix Rd, Eatonton, GA 31024-5616
 Robertson, Jerry A; PO Box 306, Dunnellon, FL 34430
 Romain, Robert; 1604 NW 3 Ln, Boynton Beach, FL 33435
 Sanchez, Hector; 1671 Harbor Side Dr, Weston, FL 33326
 Sims, Jill L; 638 Blenheim Loop, Winter Springs, FL 32708
 Spinks, Larry S; 50 Old Ivy Rd, Stockbridge, GA 30281-2129

Advisory Ordained

Biel, Ronald D; 1651 Golden Ridge Dr, The Villages, FL 32162-6766
 Boeck, Thomas R; 3668 Centerview Dr, Marietta, GA 30066-2629
 Glick, Dennis W; 3894 Candlewood Blvd, Boca Raton, FL 33487-1261

Advisory Commissioned

Abraham, Caleb Joshua Gerhard; 303 Meadows Dr, Boynton Beach, FL 33436-9161

Peterson, Jon J; 260 Alachua Dr, Winter Haven, FL 33884-1500
 Popp, Michael Scott; 3323 Abbeyfield Dr E, Jacksonville, FL 32277-0974
 Stuckert, Gordon S; 275 Mulberry Dr, Senoia, GA 30276-1369
 Tillman, Cynthia Yvonne; 2190 Morgan Wieland Ln Apt 104, Lakeland, FL 33813-3185
 Wareham, Jon G; 200 Mizzen Ct, Merritt Is, FL 32953-3059

Indiana District

Voting Ordained

Barnes, Michael W; 215 Beechnut Ct, Warsaw, IN 46582-6328
 Blakey, Charles B; 104 N Kenton St, Reynolds, IN 47980-8162
 Bloch, Philip E; 1237 Hickory Hill Rd, Seymour, IN 47274-2619
 Boshoven, Richard L; 7950 Marshall St, Merrillville, IN 46410-5219
 Christian, Douglas M; 12912 Franke Rd, Monroeville, IN 46773-9559
 Cunningham, Joseph R; 2655 Calaveras Dr, Valparaiso, IN 46385-5380
 Darnstaedt, Mark L; 1230 Oakes Rd, Georgetown, IN 47122-8723
 Fichtner, Lesley Joe; PO Box 36, Huntertown, IN 46748-0036
 Fraiser, John M; 12416 Brothers Ave, Louisville, KY 40243-2500
 Keller, James N; 225 E Woodland Ave, Fort Wayne, IN 46803-3368
 Kleinschmidt, Eric Allan; 1001 Roanoke Ct, Dyer, IN 46311-1323
 Manz, Michael Joseph; 211 Probasco St, Greendale, IN 47025-1544
 Meadows, Phillip William; 4517 W Glenwood Dr, Edinburgh, IN 46124-9123
 Muhlbach, Craig Alan; 8842 Forest Ct, Seymour, IN 47274
 Rolloff, Robb William; 343 Southwood Dr, Tipton, IN 46072-8349
 Schneider, Robert W; 3320 N Stockwell Rd, Evansville, IN 47715-1382
 Smith, Raymond Allen; 417 Iowa St, Indianapolis, IN 46225-1857
 Sutton, Jacob Roger; 9 Douglas Pl, Terre Haute, IN 47803-2001
 Taylor, Jason Warren; 6513 W 300 S, New Palestine, IN 46163-9748
 Yeager, Andrew Thomas I; 1351 S Randolph St, Garrett, IN 46738-1970

Voting Lay

Bienz, Nathan G; PO Box 122, Hoagland, IN 46745-0122
 Claybourn, James W; 513 Coffeetree Ln, Evansville, IN 47712-3007
 Eickhoff, Dennis R; 7518 Banta Woods Dr, Bargersville, IN 46106-8734
 Galenski, Mark D; 5556 Jutland Dr, Plainfield, IN 46168
 Furr, Franklin; 1165 E Oak Dr S, Winamac, IN 46996-8789
 Hall, Adam R; 3250 Woodcrest Ct, Columbus, IN 47203
 Hawk, David K; 116 E Berry St, Fort Wayne, IN 46802-2487
 Heinkel, David M; 5100 N Somerset Dr, Muncie, IN 47304-6502
 Jensen, Robert L; 231 Carnoustie Ct, Schererville, IN 46375-2919
 Lapierre, David P; 530 Grove St, Logansport, IN 46947-4810
 Leininger, Kevin J; 4831 Orchard Green Pl, Fort Wayne, IN 46804-6590
 McKinney, Karen L; 8610 Cheffield Dr, Louisville, KY 40222-5649
 Osterday, Charles A, III; 16021 County Road 14, Goshen, IN 46528
 Rieckers, Ronald J; 4216 S Co Rd 400 E, Brownstown, IN 47220
 Shutters, David E; 898 Sleepy Hollow Pl, Greenwood, IN 46142-3725
 Silletto, Aaron J; 4100 Cliffs Edge Ln, Louisville, KY 40241-1518
 Steltenpohl, Timothy J; 3982 S County Road 1200 W, Medora, IN 47260-9777
 Wiley, Gerry C; 1873 E Ravenwood Ln, Columbia City, IN 46725-7513
 Zwick, William; 19139 Golden Meadow Way, Noblesville, IN 46060

Advisory Commissioned

Brandt, Marvin J; 4249 Mockernut Ct, Columbus, IN 47201-8802
 Cunningham, Sara Ann; 2655 Calaveras Dr, Valparaiso, IN 46385-5380
 Denholm, George, III; 4554 Hackberry Dr, Columbus, IN 47201-9501
 Horning, Brian Curtis; 11555 N US Hwy 27, Decatur, IN 46733-9799
 Johnson, Paul W; 6630 Southeastern Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46203-5834

Ketcher, Karol R; 391 Golden Oak Dr, Crown Point, IN 46307-8274
 Koenemann, Darin D; 7430 Clingmans Trl, Fort Wayne, IN 46835-1418
 Meyer, Peter John; 7205 Hanna St, Fort Wayne, IN 46816-1165
 Moeller, Elizabeth A; 650 Seminole Ln, Wabash, IN 46992-1607
 Schallhorn, Mark Brian; 7545 N 650 E, Ossian, IN 46777-9632
 Schallhorn, Vicki Lynn; 7545 N 650 E, Ossian, IN 46777-9632
 Schwantz, Richard G, Jr; 1931 S Tyland Blvd, New Haven, IN 46774-1551
 Truwe, Gary M; 1834 Zinnia Dr, Indianapolis, IN 46219-2845

Iowa East District

Voting Ordained

Anderson, David C; 1104 Kimberly Rd Unit 1104, Bettendorf, IA 52722-4125
 Beisel, Paul L; 323 Lee Ln, Iowa Falls, IA 50126-1542
 Beltz, Samuel G; 2368 Merino Ave, Oskaloosa, IA 52577-9107
 Gorshe, Christopher L; PO Box 132, Riceville, IA 50466-0132
 Gray, Andrew W; 1295 Howard Ave, Marengo, IA 52301-1117
 Hansen, Sean David; 600 5th Ave SW, Mount Vernon, IA 52314-1757
 Knox, Michael R; 125 Magnolia Dr, Cedar Falls, IA 50613-1949
 Mueller, Herbert C, III; 270 Main St, Westgate, IA 50681-8638
 Pautz, Jeffrey W; 1103 Westwood Ln, Muscatine, IA 52761-2244
 Preus, Andrew J; 102 S River Park Dr, Guttenberg, IA 52052-9298
 Preus, John Christian; 656 5th Ave S, Clinton, IA 52732-4618
 Richard, Andrew Paul; 745 Hodge St, North Liberty, IA 52317-9226
 Wright, Boyd Andrew; 203 4th Ave, Keystone, IA 52249-9512

Voting Lay

Ansley, William E; 10 Schwartz Dr, Ottumwa, IA 52501-1132
 Bayer, Jeff M; 505 Blaine St, Guernsey, IA 52221-8837
 Caswell, Robert L; 1667 150th Pl, Knoxville, IA 50138-9003
 Emory, Richard A; 6122 Jebens Ave, Davenport, IA 52806
 Gibson, David L; 1120 3rd Ave SE, Cascade, IA 52033-9569
 Kleiss, Samuel T; 314 Eldora Rd, Hudson, IA 50643-9701
 Kohlmeier, Jon; 1440 Blairs Ferry Rd Apt E7, Hiawatha, IA 52233-2016
 Mark, John T; 3909 Shady Oaks Dr, Marion, IA 52302-5933
 Newton, Daniel T; PO Box 94, Blairstown, IA 52209-0094
 Ross, William R; 530 4th Ave N, Clinton, IA 52732-3943
 Schatz, Stanley A; 1102 Sunshine Ave, Osage, IA 50461-1746
 Stahlberg, Ronald H; 1620 3rd Ave NW, Waverly, IA 50677-2102
 Zoske, Jason B; PO Box 606, Hubbard, IA 50122-0606

Advisory Commissioned

Tanney, Lucas R; 1917 Downing Ave, Waterloo, IA 50701-6033

Iowa West District

Voting Ordained

Conner, Jonathan Everett; 1204 Center St, Manning, IA 51455-1531
 Dietrich, Chadric Allen; 3012 270th St, Rockwell City, IA 50579-7513
 Egger, Paul D; 400 Monona St, Galva, IA 51020-7753
 Fitzner, Timothy John; 1646 93rd Ct, W Des Moines, IA 50266-1510
 Geitz, Timothy P; 1531 3rd Ave SE, Le Mars, IA 51031-2764
 Hansen, Mark A; 902 S Carroll St, Rock Rapids, IA 51246-1945
 Henderson, Allen W; 1004 N 31st Pl, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-2920
 Kaiser, Seth Christian; 512 2nd St, Glenwood, IA 51534-1440
 Lyons, David W; PO Box 368, Schaller, IA 51053-0368
 Mahnken, Merle; 511 5th St, Schleswig, IA 51461
 Manley, Marcus G; PO Box 46, Ute, IA 51060-0046
 Riggert, Jonathan R; 725 N Roosevelt Ave, Cherokee, IA 51012-1440
 Schlund, Thomas S; 520 N Garfield, Algona, IA 50511
 Standfest, Michael R; 295 Spruce Ln, Boone, IA 50036-7365
 Stodgill, James V; 4100 46th St, Des Moines, IA 50310
 Wegner, Peter C; 612 45th St, W Des Moines, IA 50265-3819
 Whitmore, Justin; 7713 Church St, Shenandoah, IA 51601
 Zirpel, David N; 2911 S Cedar St, Sioux City, IA 51106-4202

Voting Lay

Andersen, Paul; 2441 Pueblo Dr, Sioux City, IA 51104-1529
 Aswegan, Mike R; 3025 E Douglas, Des Moines, IA 50317
 Bahrke, Karl; PO Box 177, Kingsley, IA 51028-0177
 Bockelmann, David B; PO Box 376, Dow City, IA 51528
 Bredahoeft, John; 4204 390th St, Emmetsburg, IA 50536
 Brown, Duane; 732 Fir St, Correctionville, IA 51016-1023

Farquhar, Donald E; 4350 100th Ave, Sutherland, IA 51058-7000
 Friedrich, David F; 256 620th St, Alta, IA 51002-7579
 Helvik, Jim; 1107 19th St N Apt 83, Humboldt, IA 50548
 Johnson, Loren D; 2025 190th St, Clarinda, IA 51632-4508
 Kastendieck, John Todd; 260 Johnson Ave, Fort Dodge, IA 50501
 Leege, Ray G; PO Box 126, Odebolt, IA 51458-0126
 Lyman, Randy R; 411 W 3rd St, Sanborn, IA 51248-1053
 Schumann, Danley R; 209 Jordan Dr, W Des Moines, IA 50265-4027
 Seetin, Kent; 1240 S 10th St Apt 2, Omaha, NE 68108
 Swanson, David A; 506 NE Flint St, Greenfield, IA 50849-1126
 Von Qualen, Ralph H; 17434 Noble Ave, Carroll, IA 51401-8888
 Wilson, Thomas J; 427 Newton Rd, Madrid, IA 50156

Advisory Ordained

Schmidt, Leland P; 2 Red Fox Run, Sioux City, IA 51104-1450

Kansas District

Voting Ordained

Adams, Charles W; 1430 S Cedar St, Ottawa, KS 66067-3516
 Bonine, Russell David; 8609 E Arlington Rd, Haven, KS 67543-8187
 Cook, Theodore E, Sr; 783 S 196th St, Pittsburg, KS 66762-7211
 Galchutt, Daniel M; 4211 NW Topeka Blvd, Topeka, KS 66617-1765
 Gumz, Patrick Michael; 1009 N College St, Ulysses, KS 67880-1532
 Harries, Thomas H; 12691 W 82nd Ter, Lenexa, KS 66215-2644
 Kerns, Douglas Scot, II; 282 E Fox Dr, Lincoln, KS 67455
 Mc Call, George Timothy; 806 S 1st St, Atwood, KS 67730-2108
 Ockree, Benjamin R; 713 Laramie St, Atchison, KS 66002-1848
 Panzer, Justin A; 1663 Hwy 15, Abilene, KS 67410-6354
 Schotte, Michael L; 40307 NE 40th Ave, Preston, KS 67583-8572
 Sherry, Jacob Timothy; 312 National Rd, Palmer, KS 66962-8902
 Snow, Scott A; 15320 E Windham Ct, Wichita, KS 67230-6907
 Van Duzer, Thomas N; 4441 Lloyd St, Kansas City, KS 66103-3229
 Vogts, Kevin D; 34838 Block Rd, Paola, KS 66071-6201
 Vossler, Christopher P; PO Box 141, McFarland, KS 66501-0141

Voting Lay

Campbell, Erich G; 525 New York Ave, Holton, KS 66436-1709
 Carpenter, Mike P; 3207 Mourning Dove Ln, Newton, KS 67114-9784
 Casey, Laurie; 6770 E 34th St N, Wichita, KS 67226-2527
 Culbertson, Kenneth W; 820 Butterfield Rd, Manhattan, KS 66502-7174
 Fruechtenicht, Stephen G; 31766 159th St, Leavenworth, KS 66048-9492
 Hagemann, Richard L; 797 N 90th St, Hepler, KS 66746-2117
 Meyer, Jay B; PO Box 1085, Sublette, KS 67877-1085
 Perry, Thomas E; 10029 Rosehill Rd, Lenexa, KS 66215-1712
 Rinker, Jeffrey S; 210 Heather St, Burlington, KS 66839-9266
 Rolf, Glenard A, Sr; 201 E Karla Ave Apt 1, Haysville, KS 67060-1827
 Schotte, Richard; 470 Elk Rd, Bremen, KS 66412-8647
 Schulteis, Marvin H; 5619 Plymouth Dr, Lawrence, KS 66049-5003
 Sebts, David R; 5 Bluegrass Ct, Hesston, KS 67062-8968
 Suetler, Victor; 2185 E Iron Dr, Lincoln, KS 67455
 Vincent, John D; 35 W 1400 Rd, Long Island, KS 67647-4006
 Welch, Steve; 22605 Renner Rd, Spring Hill, KS 66083-3063

Advisory Ordained

Peck, Jerome K; 709 Rosewood Ct, Paola, KS 66071-9105

Advisory Commissioned

Jensema, Ashley Carol; 3732 SW 29th St Apt 228, Topeka, KS 66614-2134
 Mann, Brian Carl; 412 E 5th Ave, Winfield, KS 67156-2220
 Spiehs, Shawna Lynae; PO Box 126, Linn, KS 66953-0126

Michigan District

Voting Ordained

Bakker, Jonathon Joseph; 2990 W Pickard Rd, Mt Pleasant, MI 48858-8271
 Belinsky, Michael Gregory, Sr; 1957 S Pioneer Rd, Beulah, MI 49617-9502
 Bira, Clifford F; 6356 Queens Ct, Flushing, MI 48433-3523

Bomberger, Kenneth J; 189 Chary Ridge View Ct, Kent City, MI 49330
 Boyer, Michael David; 616 Hickory Ct, Sebawaing, MI 48759-1413
 Brand, Timothy John; PO Box 348, Mayfield, MI 49666-0348
 Clark, Paul M; PO Box 317, Fowler, MI 48835-0317
 Dent, Matthew T; 5606 Johnsfeld Rd, Standish, MI 48658-9430
 Fienen, Daniel Henry; C/o Grace Lutheran Church, 8636 S M 37, Baldwin, MI 49304-8032
 Fischer, Thomas F; 1892 E Auburn Rd, Rochester Hls, MI 48307-4801
 Frusti, Todd I; 706 W Flint St, Davison, MI 48423-1010
 Gaertner, Evan Paul; 9743 Betty Dr, Brighton, MI 48116-8544
 Herter, Paul W; 5653 Forrister Rd, Adrian, MI 49221-9422
 Hoyer, Joel F; 250 Cleveland St E, Coopersville, MI 49404-8400
 Johnson, Randy L; 7826 Galbraith Rd, Cheboygan, MI 49721-9071
 Johnson, Russell Dean; 22453 E Schafer St, Clinton Twp, MI 48035-1868
 Johnson, Scott E; 2651 W Bacon Rd, Hillsdale, MI 49242-9183
 Jung, David A; 1355 E Kitchen Rd, Pinconning, MI 48650-7484
 Koy, Norman A; 45160 Van Dyke Ave, Utica, MI 48317-5578
 Krueger, James F; 2811 Oaklawn Park, Saginaw, MI 48603-6161
 Lett, Randy Donald; 5791 Sawyer Rd # 247, Sawyer, MI 49125-9257
 Loewe, Timothy J; 1568 Indian Creek Dr, Temperance, MI 48182-3211
 Morales, Eddie; 29059 Tiffany Dr West, Southfield, MI 48034
 Muhle, Dean Ray; 6951 Shellenbarger Rd, Hale, MI 48739-9082
 Penhallegon, Philip W; 640 Allen Rd, Milan, MI 48160-1526
 Peters, Matthew A; C/o Zion Lutheran Church, 500 W Mitchell St, Petoskey, MI 49770-2231
 Richert, Aaron Michael; 4526 Torrington Dr, Sterling Hts, MI 48310-5071
 Schmidt, David P; 513 S Troy St, Royal Oak, MI 48067-2720
 Schultz, Joshua M; 1015 Golf Course Rd, Alpena, MI 49707-1253
 Schultz, Roderick D; 13562 Milton Dr, Belleville, MI 48111-2361
 Sidwell, David H, III; 3036 Valley Glenn Cir, Kalamazoo, MI 49004-3234
 Stahl, Michael Gilford; PO Box 66, Munger, MI 48747-0066
 Sutton, David J; 6671 Marlette St, Marlette, MI 48453-1206
 Todd, Kelly D; 5245 Hadley Rd, Goodrich, MI 48438-9640
 Undlin, Paul Joseph; 5674 Willow Creek Dr, Canton, MI 48187-3325
 Vergin, Aaron Hansen; 1056 Nokomis Way, Waterford, MI 48328-4250
 Wangelin, William Roy; 7006 Captiva Dr, Lansing, MI 48917-5821
 Werner, Paul G; 24125 26 Mile Rd, Ray, MI 48096-4534
 Woell, Brennan Andrew; PO Box 66, Nunica, MI 49448
 Zeile, Richard A; 15 Timberlane Ct, Dearborn, MI 48126-2615

Voting Lay

Abraham, James G; 6100 Hess Rd, Saginaw, MI 48601-9428
 Anderson, Michael K; 15710 Prevost St, Detroit, MI 48227-1965
 Arego, Douglas A; 5964 Shore Orchid Dr, Gaylord, MI 49735-8953
 Azzam, Kathy L; 6098 Stagecoach Trl, Oscoda, MI 48750-8737
 Ball, Clara D; 76555 Wahl Rd, Richmond, MI 48062-3521
 Barnard, Donald M; 4005 N Meridian Rd, Sanford, MI 48657-9587
 Beier, Beverly J; 681 Quincy Grange Rd, Quincy, MI 49082-9481
 Beuschel, David; 21379 16th Ave, Conklin, MI 49403-8702
 De Jonge, David A; 7463 Westwood Dr, Jenison, MI 49428
 Dunker, Steven J; 545 Shady Ln, China, MI 48054-4187
 Enge, Jonathan M; 6425 Mackinaw Rd, Saginaw, MI 48604
 Evanson, Brian D; 36816 Pepper Ct, Sterling Hts, MI 48312-3274
 Ferguson, Timothy J; 4739 Mckinley Rd, Mio, MI 48647-9439
 Heimsoth, Jeremy E; 503 Lambert Dr, S. Johns, MI 48879-2409
 Hoels, Lisa M; 323 Theo Ave, Lansing, MI 48917-2648
 Hynes, Terrence; 1261 Irene Dr, Troy, MI 48083
 Keinath, Gerald A; 1729 Deckerville Rd, Deckerville, MI 48427-9410
 Koke, John D; 7108 Cleon Dr, Swartz Creek, MI 48473-9444
 Krieger, Timothy; 201 S Mechanic St, Berrien Spgs, MI 49103-1138
 Krug, John R; 323 Scott St, Monroe, MI 48161-2132
 Lange, Steven A; 310 State St, Vicksburg, MI 49097-1228
 Lewis, Richard E; 8470 E Curtis Rd, Frankenmuth, MI 48734-9546
 Lytikainen, Paul; 6060 Capitan Sr, Grand Rapids, MI 49546
 Martin, David A; 121 Cass Ave, Clinton, MI 49236-9460
 Merte, David C; 83 Scott Blvd, Mount Clemens, MI 48043-1747
 Miller, Richard K; 6480 Rolling Meadows Dr, Traverse City, MI 49684-8320

Nutzmann, John W; 11878 Parklane St, Mount Morris, MI 48458-1430
 Petrowsky, Harold A; 2904 Tanglewood Dr, Wayne, MI 48184-2815
 Pranschke, Joshua S; 26150 Orchard Lake Rd, Farmington Hls, MI 48334-4537
 Rabedeau, Louis; 822 Panorama, Milford, MI 48381
 Reinking, Jack W; 15270 Leonard Rd, Spring Lake, MI 49456
 Richardson, Jewel A; 13428 Caberfae Hwy, Wellston, MI 49689-9720
 Richert, Joel F O; 23607 N Park Dr, New Boston, MI 48164
 Riske, James M; 2280 Clearwood Ct, Shelby Twp, MI 48316-1014
 Shipley, David L; 671 E Long Lake Dr, Harrison, MI 48625-8834
 Slaten, Mark F; 2425 Applewood Dr, Lapeer, MI 48446-9013
 Steinley, Brian E; 5089 McIney St, Fairgrove, MI 48733-5100
 Wagner, Lloyd A; 1811 4th St, Jackson, MI 49203
 Wellington, Jeanne M; 1111 Johnston St, Sault Ste Marie, MI 49783
 Zaske, Todd A; 17430 Sumner, Redford, MI 48240

Advisory Ordained

Grannis, Michael J; 13905 Milton Dr, Belleville, MI 48111-2353
 Grimm, Gerald E; 21628 Mary Rose Dr, Macomb, MI 48044-6061
 Heinecke, Gerald Daniel; 8335 Canal Rd, Utica, MI 48317-5502

Advisory Commissioned

Fish, Dale Walton; 7278 Blake Dr, Bay City, MI 48706-8313
 Gierach, Raymond C; 50144 Riverside Dr, Macomb, MI 48044-1236
 Hackbarth, Richard O E; 4670 Beechnut Dr, Saint Joseph, MI 49085-9373
 Hooper, Susan L; 6102 Kings Shire Rd, Grand Blanc, MI 48439-8712
 Keup, Karen Lynne; 5115 Sheridan Rd, Saginaw, MI 48601-9304
 Kurth, Ruth J; 3271 Gold Dust St NE, Belmont, MI 49306-9152
 Laughlin-Adler, Barbara Jean; 1404 Coventry Square Dr, Ann Arbor, MI 48103-6311
 Locke, George M; 4297 Forest Bridge Dr, Canton, MI 48188-7918
 Nimtz, Mark A; 1127 Shadow Dr, Troy, MI 48085-1779
 Pearson, Kathryn L; 4651 Richville Rd, Vassar, MI 48768-9459
 Weismantel, Paul O; 15162 Mulligan Dr, Bath, MI 48808-9621
 Weston, Amy J; 1715 Paramount St, Novi, MI 48377-2088

Mid-South District

Voting Ordained

Besel, Gordon W; PO Box 219, Rogers, AR 72757-0219
 Gadabaw, David R; 58 Belle Cove Pl, Mountain Home, AR 72653-8436
 Gierke, John Peter; 1640 Highpoint Dr, Conway, AR 72034-6099
 Hatcher, Joshua McCrory; 210 Washington Ave, Memphis, TN 38103-1910
 Jansen, Nathan R; 231 E Forest Park Dr, Dickson, TN 37055-2254
 McMinn, Theodore David, III; 3950 Verble Sherrell Rd, Cookeville, TN 38506
 Roberts, Derek A; 712 Knights Bridge Rd, Maryville, TN 37803-1954
 Schleider, Michael James; 1201 Oxford Ave, Benton, AR 72019-2664
 Toopes, Andrew W; 334 Sylvan Cir, Bowling Green, KY 42101-6315
 Truog, Brian M; 260 Wade Rd W, Loudon, TN 37774-3412
 Willadsen, Joshua J; 8012 Williamsburg Rd, Fort Smith, AR 72903-5131

Voting Lay

Breitenfeld, Richard T; 2 Oshee Cir, Cherokee Vlg, AR 72529-5217
 Brugge, Michael J; 7214 Belgrave Cv, Germantown, TN 38138
 Caddell, John R; 4311 Knoxville Hwy, Oliver Spgs, TN 37840-3905
 Davenport, Dennis R; 18033 Hwy 39, Brinkley, AR 72021
 Foster, William; 1 Shetland Dr, Bella Vista, AR 72715
 Higgins, Marc; 148 Apple Blossom Loop, Maumelle, AR 72113-6031
 Jacobs, Dan E; 7018 River Run Dr, Chattanooga, TN 37416-1045
 Legendre, Michael G; 8255 Danube Dr, West Paducah, KY 42086
 Metzler, Juanita B; 100 Winchester Pt, Hot Springs, AR 71913-8854
 Robert, James; 2112 Hartland Rd, Franklin, TN 37069-6408

Simko, Janet; 101 Walden Ridge Dr, Fairfield Glade, TN 38558

Advisory Ordained

Schulz, John P; 8332 Birch Run Ln, Knoxville, TN 37919-8726

Advisory Commissioned

Baisch, Evelyn Jean; 106 Rampart Cir, Fairfield Bay, AR 72088-4126
Piepenbrink, Allen C; 144 Quail Rdg, Jackson, TN 38305-5419

Minnesota North District

Voting Ordained

Beck, John E; 830 S Rush Creek Ln, Rush City, MN 55069-7002
Bohler, Steven W; 800 Washington Ave, Crookston, MN 56716-2318
Breach, Michael Eugene; 1601 Broadway, Wheaton, MN 56296-1052
Collins, Robin A; 1021 5th St NE, Staples, MN 56479-3118
Douglas, Kirk D; PO Box J, New York MIs, MN 56567-0370
Finnern, Brady Lee; 914 15th St N, Sartell, MN 56377-2502
Freiberg, Marc L F, Sr; 604 E Rutherford St, Ogilvie, MN 56358-9034
Hartwig, Brett David; 2515 29th Ave S, Moorhead, MN 56560-5362
Hinz, David Walter; 1507 Scenic Heights Rd NE, Alexandria, MN 56308-8693
Koepp, Joel Gregory; 5595 130th Ave, Wood Lake, MN 56297-1497
Mc Manus, Dennis J; 404A Sanford Rd Ste 101A, Benson, MN 56215-1091
Muehlberg, Scott A; 46914 State Hwy 34, Osage, MN 56570-9303
Roberts, Guy Willard; 31332 SW Pickerel Lake Rd, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501-7516
Sorensen, James Tracy; PO Box 631, Blackduck, MN 56630-0631
Stauty, Donald M; 7606 Hwy 68, Virginia, MN 55792-8014
Timm, Bruce A; 2719 3rd St N, Saint Cloud, MN 56303-4224
Walther, Jeffrey H; 4 Elizabeth Ave, Esko, MN 55733-9630
Zellers, Kevin C; 28200 Jodrell St NE, North Branch, MN 55056-6344

Voting Lay

Carr, Ardith; 505 Brown St SW, Verndale, MN 56481
Copeland, Jon L; 834 2nd Ave N, Sauk Rapids, MN 56379
Dinger, Justin D; 3645 Carlton St, Barnum, MN 55707-9659
Euren, Gary E; 2865 35th St S, Moorhead, MN 56560-5448
Groth-Childs, LaVaun; 1320 Washington Ave Unit 107, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501-3927
Hansen, Duane C; 354 Lake Ave S, Spicer, MN 56288-9619
Johnson, Waldo P; 13651 110th St, Hoffman, MN 56339-3938
Keske, Allan R; 13342 290th Ave NW, Zimmerman, MN 55398-8648
Kister, Valerie J; 3197 141st Ave, Bellingham, MN 56212-2057
Langton, Mark C; 31109 Hazel Rd, Akeley, MN 56433-8053
Lemmerman, James; 6316 Nashua St, Duluth, MN 55807-1147
McCollum, Ryan A; 3419 Birchmont Dr NE, Bemidji, MN 56601-4318
Ollrich, August; 53434 Smolik Rd, Max, MN 56659
Roundal, Alex; 616 Cherry Rd, Thief River Falls, MN 56701
Rubis, John E; 535 State St S, Eden Valley, MN 55329-1626
Sprengeler, Mark A; 228 Morning View Ln, Sauk Centre, MN 56378-8375
Stokes, Kenneth B; 11052 Robinwood Ln, Brainerd, MN 56401-5947
Ward, Gene T; 9321 Park Lane Dr NE, Alexandria, MN 56308-8031

Advisory Ordained

Kath, Harvey G; 21133 Eden Dr, Nevis, MN 56467-5079

Advisory Commissioned

Keyes, Peter James; 400 4th St NE, Little Falls, MN 56345-2725

Minnesota South District

Voting Ordained

Bremsteth, Richard L; 88945 600th Ave, Alpha, MN 56111-3252
Briel, Steven C; 17425 83rd Ave N, Maple Grove, MN 55311-1755
Griebel, Kirk E; 1230 Esther Ln, Owatonna, MN 55060-4527
Haakana, Jon T; 8333 Emery Pkwy N, Champlin, MN 55316-2492
Jarvis, Robert W; 1712 Ibis Dr, Buffalo, MN 55313-5679
Krusemark, Jesse Ehme; 29952 570th Ave, Austin, MN 55912-6560

LaPlant, LeRoy J; 151 Jefferson Ave, New Germany, MN 55367-4704
Lorfeld, Matthew D; 1112 Willow St, La Crescent, MN 55947-1482
Mumme, David Carl; 415 Lake St W, Waterville, MN 56096-1323
Oster, Kevin Wade; 69570 185th St, Dassel, MN 55325-7522
Park, Thomas Dom; 7035 48th St N, Oakdale, MN 55128-2649
Parrish, Brent L; 20200 Fairlawn Ave, Prior Lake, MN 55372-8846
Provost, Daniel Max; PO Box 750, Lakefield, MN 56150-0750
Ristow, Neil G; 14980 Diamond Path W, Rosemount, MN 55068-4505
Ruckman, Gary L; C/o St John Lutheran Church, 38957 State Hwy 19, Arlington, MN 55307
Sabol, William G; 450 1st Ave SW, Winnebago, MN 56098-2013
Schilbe, Scott R; 2904 20th St SE, Rochester, MN 55904
Schmidt, Neldo; 4054 Cinnabar Dr, Eagan, MN 55122-2917
Schroeder, David B; 1596 Millpond Ct Apt 302, Chaska, MN 55318
Stefanic, James John; 604 Roosevelt St, Marshall, MN 56258-1952
Volbrecht, Gregory Howard; 119 3rd St SE, Madelia, MN 56062-1821
Volker, Thomas G; 5645 Chicago Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55417-2429
Zacharias, Eric L; 14725 County Road 153, Cologne, MN 55322-9143
Zucker, Tyge C; 818 Snowbird Dr, Red Wing, MN 55066-7172

Voting Lay

Anderson, James W; 5497 Crossandra St SE, Prior Lake, MN 55372-2513
Baggenstoss, Gary C; 10777 181st Circle NW, Elk River, MN 55330
Bartel-Smith, Sue D; 619 Tower Ct SE, Stewartville, MN 55976
Benson, Justin J; 1103 Winona St SE, Chatfield, MN 55923
Brammeier, John; 109 Fred St, Springfield, MN 56097
Draper, John C; 634 111th St, Pipestone, MN 56164-1396
Finger, Richard L; 215 S 1st St, Lewiston, MN 55952-1414
Gartland, Wayne; 8790 Lake Blvd, Chisago City, MN 55013
Grimm, Daniel W; 14210 114th St, Nya, MN 55397-8401
Hendrickson, Mel R; 604 Wall St, North Mankato, MN 56003
Kirsch, Martin J; 6725 Penn Ave S, Richfield, MN 55423-2008
Kirtz, Rebecca; 1603 W 4th St, Red Wing, MN 55066
Kruse, Gary; 60436 120th St, Hutchinson, MN 55350
Mielke, Jon D; 2214 Hulett Ave, Faribault, MN 55021
Olson, James H; 404 Lincoln St N, Atwater, MN 56209
Pierson, William; 22738 Flower Rd, Silver Lake, NM 55381
Post, David H; 80240 360th Ave, Okabena, MN 56161-3042
Reinitz, Andrew H; 4977 Brunswick Rd, Mound, MN 55364-8593
Rolf, Ben J; 20132 Hillside Dr, Rogers, MN 55374-9386
Rucks, Maynard W; 35493 226th St, Henderson, MN 56044-3383
Scherger, Robert E; 61895 205th Ave, Dodge Center, MN 55927-8009
Swedan, Richard; 1535 Clemson Dr Unit A, Eagan, MN 55122
Webster, Edmund H; 409 Burlington Rd, Saint Paul, MN 55119-5313
Wiederhoeft, Corey L; 41961 830th Ave, Truman, MN 56088

Advisory Ordained

Graff, Paul L; 412 Independence St NE, New Prague, MN 56071-2069
Krueger, Robert H; 17756 Marschall Rd, Jordan, MN 55352-9479

Advisory Commissioned

Burkart, Jeffrey E; 433 Irene Ct, Roseville, MN 55113-3520
Loontjer, Gary L; 2101 Blake Ave, Lester Pr, MN 55354-2002
Martens, Sean Paul; 13575 Harvest Ct, Apple Valley, MN 55124-9597
Pfeiffer, Cletus Ralph; 5615 23rd Ave NW, Rochester, MN 55901-2123

Missouri District

Voting Ordained

Boettcher, Mark A; 490 State Hwy F, Jackson, MO 63755-7315
Boisclair, David R; 4121 Beggs Blvd, St Louis, MO 63121-3103
Braun, Allen L; 22303 Mt Hulda Ave, Cole Camp, MO 65325-2354
Brunette, John S; 6101 Telegraph Rd, St Louis, MO 63129-4655
Clow, Keith M; PO Box 42, Auxvasse, MO 65231-0042
Dock, Jeffrey M; 115 Marys Dr, Louisiana, MO 63353-2707
Drewitz, Glen A; 701 E Harrison St, Brunswick, MO 65236-1388

Ehrhard, Jacob William; 711 Sawyer Ter, New Haven, MO 63068-1055
Filipek, Adam Tyler; 5180 Parker Rd, Black Jack, MO 63033-4653
Hagerman, Nicholas Lee; 1415 S Holland Ave, Springfield, MO 65807-1813
Henrickson, Charles M; 5552 Duessell Ln Apt A, St Louis, MO 63128-5016
Hoehner, Robert P; 244 Strayhorn Dr, St Peters, MO 63376-6411
Jauss, Marcus R; 109 E 12th St, Higginsville, MO 64037-1116
Kamprath, Stephen P; 59 Rolla Gardens Dr, Rolla, MO 65401-3980
Kobak, Anthony F; 3573 Dana Dr, Jackson, MO 63755-3770
Lemcke, Brian S; 1413 1/2 Nebraska St, Mound City, MO 64470
Loesch, Jeremy D; 1001 SW Merryman Dr, Lee's Summit, MO 64082-3900
Meyer, Joel William; 10100 SE County Road 9526, Rockville, MO 64780
Riordan, Steve G; 1018 Hwy 109, Wildwood, MO 63038-1401
Scheperle, Gerald R; 4409 Saint Johns Rd, Jefferson City, MO 65101-9564
Seidler, Scott Kenneth; 505 S Kirkwood Rd, Kirkwood, MO 63122-5925
Sonntag, Donald; 1402 Webster Dr, Mexico, MO 65265
Steinbrueck, Roger C; 3642 County Road 415, Friedheim, MO 63747-7453
Stirdivant, Mark B; 207 NW 59th Ter, Gladstone, MO 64118-4027
Wilson, William G; 6704 Fyler Ave, St Louis, MO 63139
Wing, Daniel S; 108 Medallion Dr, Sweet Springs, MO 65351-1419
Woerth, Warren R; 2211 Tenbrook Rd, Arnold, MO 63010-1516
Zerkel, Bradley G; 17906 E 24th Terrace Ct S, Independence, MO 64057-1333

Voting Lay

Anderson, Thomas C; 411 Maupin St, New Haven, MO 63068
Beilharz, John; 1136 County Rd 2328, Moberly, MO 65270
Brandt, Aaron; 980 NE 10, Knob Noster, MO 65336-2010
Bredhoeft, Neal; 10924 Hwy 23, Alma, MO 64001-8157
Brickler, John; 4633 Grandcastle Dr, St Louis, MO 63128-3078
Davis, R Scott; 26 Rio Vista Dr, St Louis, MO 63124
Decker, Larry F; 2322 Jonathan Dr, Jackson, MO 63755
Fitzgerald, Thomas; 6108 Englewood Ave, Raytown, MO 64133-4425
Friedel, Joshua; 5100 Foxridge Dr Apt 522, Mission, KS 66202
Giles, Richard; 3845 Robert Ave, St Louis, MO 63116-3054
Hathcock, John D; 138 Stone Circle Dr, Branson, MO 65616-9297
Hunnewell, Sumner G; 2030 San Pedro Dr, Arnold, MO 63010-4161
Jacobs, Karl; 22716 Hwy 19, Salem, MO 65560
Kiefer, Daniel H; 104 Northview Dr, Perryville, MO 63775-6511
Knoernschild, Timothy O; 870 SE Hwy 7, Clinton, MO 64735-9573
Lekar, Mark W; 1670 Sneak Rd, Foristell, MO 63348-2104
Lemon, Martin D; 15705 Heathercroft Dr, Chesterfield, MO 63017
Linhardt, Harvey D; 3711 Midview Ave, Bridgeton, MO 63044
Mayes, Rebecca; 2241 S Jefferson Ave, St Louis, MO 63104
Muench, John; 4561 State Hwy W, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701-9192
Newman, Douglas A; 6378 Red Bud, Fulton, MO 65251-6464
Piper, Joshua E; PO Box 334, New Melle, MO 63365
Rupp, Charles J; 6653 Farm Road 1062, Purdy, MO 65734-8617
Saugstad, Dennis L; PO Box 68, Weston, MO 64098-0068
Schreiner, Robert W; 6542 Green Rdg, Hannibal, MO 63401-6442
Staehling, Philip S; 1109 S 15th St, Bethany, MO 64424-2415
Weber, James; 3420 Country Club Dr, Jefferson City, MO 65109-1031
Weinhold, Delmer R; PO Box 524, Bonne Terre, MO 63628-0524

Advisory Ordained

Dissen, David V; 211 Hillview St, Cape Girardeau, MO 63703-6327
Goddard, Paul E; 501 E Eldon St, St James, MO 65559
Rogers, James C; 1525 Hampton Hall Dr Apt 17, Chesterfield, MO 63017-4928
Zimmerman, Darrell W; 13259 Bonroyal Dr, Des Peres, MO 63131-1904

Advisory Commissioned

Beerman, John W; 6181 Walkenhorst Rd, Concordia, MO 64020-7231

Berger, David O; 800 Berry Hill Dr, Olivette, MO 63132-3502
 Bobzin, John C; 32513 County Line Rd, Concordia, MO 64020-6353
 Buchholz, David Allen; 6609 N Camden Ave, Kansas City, MO 64151-1998
 Cochran, William David, Jr; 1430 Whispering Creek Dr, Ballwin, MO 63021-8469
 Eggold, Stephen F; 2033 Saint Christopher Way, Arnold, MO 63010-3981
 Engelbrecht, John M; 1110 Meadows Pl, Jefferson City, MO 65101-3782
 Flandermeyer, Michael D; 3010 Sherwood Ln, St Charles, MO 63301-0723
 Fuchs, Judith M; 1513 N Clark St, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701-2957
 Honoree, Cheryl L; PO Box 33, Altenburg, MO 63732-0033
 Jorgensen, Steven Andrew; 705 NW 12th St, Blue Springs, MO 64015-3037
 Miller, Jason Thomas; 2161 Olde Winery Rd, St Louis, MO 63129-4842
 Rice, Denise L; 835 La Bonne Pkwy, Manchester, MO 63021-7056

Montana District

Voting Ordained

Frahm, John A, III; 3819 3rd Ave E, Williston, ND 58801
 Peterson, Kevin M; 5 Miller Ln, Salmon, ID 83467-5163
 Tabbert, Christopher J; PO Box 332, Eureka, MT 59917-0332
 Toombs, Jason Wiley; C/o First Lutheran Church, 2231 E Broadway St, Helena, MT 59601-4807
 Wendt, Ryan David; 2342 S 45th St W, Billings, MT 59106-3864

Voting Lay

Delgado, Frank D; 35489 Dublin Gulch Rd, St Ignatus, MT 59865-9213
 Ebel, Tom; 1163 Toole Ct, Billings, MT 59105
 Halvorson, Tom R; 35240 Cr 121 C, Sidney, MT 59270
 Jarvis, Stephen D; 660 Sunhawk Ln, Hamilton, MT 59840-9757
 Zoeller, Marcus; 3300 E Graf St Unit 20, Bozeman, MT 59715

Advisory Ordained

Donnan, John Michael; 2913 Unertal Ave, Billings, MT 59101-6870

Advisory Commissioned

Kern, Becky Sue; 326 Harrison Blvd, Kalispell, MT 59901-2625

Nebraska District

Voting Ordained

Armon, Rodney A; PO Box 185, Doniphan, NE 68832-0185
 Bruick, Scott Dennis; 1101 N 5th St, Seward, NE 68434-1238
 Dickmader, Jon M; PO Box 144, Brule, NE 69127-0144
 Dunbar, Paul T; 846 Chestnut Ave, Hastings, NE 68901-4258
 Feddern, David A; 913 N State Hwy 11, Atkinson, NE 68713-4407
 Goodman, Harrison Alan; PO Box 66, Winside, NE 68790-0066
 Hannemann, Mark T; 15005 Q St, Omaha, NE 68137-2525
 Jank, Roland A, Jr; 7301 N 28th Ave, Omaha, NE 68112-2816
 Jurchen, Peter L; 4610 18th St, Columbus, NE 68601-3908
 Kuefner, Robert Charles, Jr; 211 E 7th St, Lexington, NE 68850-2101
 Kuhfal, David Paul; 109 F St, Neligh, NE 68756-1643
 Maronde, Christopher Allan; 1928 Prospect St, Lincoln, NE 68502-2629
 Mau, Matthew Lee; 1409 Road S, Waco, NE 68460-9203
 Meyer, Ryan W; 2247 County Road 400, Tobias, NE 68453-2041
 Ripke, Jonathan Mark; 27068 County Road 12, Hooper, NE 68031-5009
 Scheich, Jeffrey L; 5141 Larkwood Rd, Lincoln, NE 68516-5311
 Schmidt, Charles O; 1616 G St, Fairbury, NE 68352-1340
 Seymour, Ryan Nolan; 330 Lambrecht St, Beemer, NE 68716-4213
 Wellman, Keith B; 33851 Road 726, Wauneta, NE 69045-5000
 Williams, Barry A; 82660 547 Ave, Madison, NE 68748-6141
 Wolff, Michael D; 704 Smith Ave, Elwood, NE 68937-5214
 Wolter, Jason M; 217 S 13th St, Tecumseh, NE 68450-2231
 Ziegler, Karl P; 420 N Washington St, Papillion, NE 68046-2200

Voting Lay

Bartels, Steven D; 73231 616 Ave, Sterling, NE 68443-6062
 Bauman, Dale; PO Box 1, Fairfield, NE 68938-0001
 Beyer, Peggy L; 72430 567th Ave, Daykin, NE 68338
 Brodbeck, Alan L; PO Box 335, O'neill, NE 68763-0335
 Burger, Michael F; 5237 Road RS, Davenport, NE 68335-3060

Cornett, Kimberly A; PO Box 515, Wisner, NE 68791-0515
 Doane, Tyler C; PO Box 354, Wood River, NE 68883-0354
 Ervin, Rachel E; 219 E 8th St, Ogallala, NE 69153
 Goertzen, Sharon J; 347 D St, Hampton, NE 68843-9215
 Green, Louise; 814 Poplar St, Wayne, NE 68787
 Hansen, Byron; 807 E 49th Street Pl, Kearney, NE 68847-8580
 Harding, Dennis C; 335 B Rd, Eagle, NE 68347-8815
 Hering, Robert J; PO Box 458, Battle Creek, NE 68715-0458
 Johnsen, David W; PO Box 1145, Imperial, NE 69033-1145
 Lund, Ellen V; 1929 N Broad St, Fremont, NE 68025-2943
 Marunda, Richard; 1912 Apollo Ln, Papillion, NE 68133-3410
 McDermatt, Tim; 421 Ash St, Wilber, NE 68465
 Nelson, Vernon J; 73211 J Rd, Holdrege, NE 68949-9217
 Nielsen, David; 54527 880 Rd, Bloomfield, NE 68718
 Rethwisch, Michael D; 541 32 Rd, Rising City, NE 68658-3749
 Sharman, Gary W; 3272 37th Ave, Columbus, NE 68601
 Trusty, Steven M; 1375 Rolling Hills Loop, Council Blfs, IA 51503-8552
 Zotti, Randy; 4361 S 145th St, Omaha, NE 68137

Advisory Ordained

Porath, Norman Earl; 8331 SW 98th St, Denton, NE 68339-3135

Advisory Commissioned

Anson, Harlan D; 635 South St, Staplehurst, NE 68439-3017
 Bartels, Judy K; 569 County Road U, Tobias, NE 68453-2059
 Leech, William Alan; 1011 E 7th St, Hastings, NE 68901-7634
 Stortz, Steven B; 102 Maple St, Hadar, NE 68701-0200

New England District

Voting Ordained

Bartell, Christopher D; 11 Woodlawn Cir, Exeter, NH 03833-1827
 Booe, Phillip Eugene; 66 Millstream Rd, Amston, CT 06231-1420
 Butler, James E; 6 Crawford St, Randolph, MA 02368-1513
 Harper, Walter J; 47 Quaker Ridge Rd, Bethel, CT 06801
 Kleckner, Mark D; 424 Davis Rd, Bedford, MA 01730-1514
 Kotila, Joel David; 12 Maple St, Terryville, CT 06786-5220
 Manor, Jonathan J; 37 Prospect St, New Hartford, CT 06057-2223

Voting Lay

Brooks, Jerry P; 27 Greentree Dr, Waterford, CT 06385-4100
 Brose, Paul F; 277 Birch Bluffs Dr, Westfield, MA 01085-4810
 Bussing, William R; 26 Honeysuckle Ln, Hanover, MA 02339-3113
 Geffert, Kerry A; 58 Soundview Ave, Huntington, CT 06484-2724
 Kalwat, Donald; 16 Simpkins Dr, Bristol, CT 06010-2650
 Vekasy, Steven A; 3 Ridgewood Ave, Keene, NH 03431
 Zeneski, Joseph M; 78 Merriam District, North Oxford, MA 01537-1052

New Jersey District

Voting Ordained

Gewecke, Stephen A; 1606 Harbournet Rocktown Rd, Lambertville, NJ 08530-3004
 Iovine, Anthony J; 234 Grand St, New Milford, NJ 07646-1635
 Schonberg, Christian L; 803 Catherine St, Pt Pleasant, NJ 08742-4080
 Serina, Richard James, Jr; 50 Erskine Rd, Ringwood, NJ 07456
 Uphoff, Aaron Daniel; 319 Quaker Church Rd, Randolph, NJ 07869-1314
 Vossler, L Richard, Jr; 3 Berkeley Ter, Livingston, NJ 07039-3911

Voting Lay

Jennings, Thomas A; 315 E St, Middlesex, NJ 08846-1707
 Knorr, Stuart T; 743 Montauk Dr, Forked River, NJ 08731-5331
 Schmidt, William H; 291 N Farview Ave, Paramus, NJ 07652-3349
 Torelli, Joseph R; 32 Hooyman Dr, Clifton, NJ 07013-3611
 Walko, John P; 86 Ridge Rd, West Milford, NJ 07480-2969
 Weiss, Steven; 3139 County Road 516, Old Bridge, NJ 08857

Advisory Ordained

Huneke, Paul R; 3 Bay Hill Rd, Lakewood, NJ 08701-3872

Advisory Commissioned

Vogt, Caren M; 251 Wheatsworth Rd, Hamburg, NJ 07419-2607

North Dakota District

Voting Ordained

Daenzer, Sean C; 316 Iowa Ave, Barney, ND 58008-4017
 Heller, Toby H; PO Box 189, Beulah, ND 58523-0189
 Hill, Robert T; PO Box 195, Wimbledon, ND 58492-0195

Jahnke, Clark H; 325 Cherry Ct, West Fargo, ND 58078-2923
 Rothchild, Daryl G; PO Box 421, Newburg, ND 58762-0421
 Stout, Timothy L; 1520 College Dr N, Devils Lake, ND 58301-1502

Voting Lay

Corwin, Sue; 1811 6th Ave SW Apt 12, Jamestown, ND 58401-6262
 Dever, Dick D; 1416 Eastwood St, Bismarck, ND 58504-6226
 Isaak, Corey; 3647 Harrison St S, Fargo, ND 58104
 Poppinga, Harvey L; 4815 76th St NW, Donnybrook, ND 58734-9627
 Puffe, William H; 214 Cottonwood St, Grand Forks, ND 58201-4588
 Wurl, Robert P; PO Box 514, Hankinson, ND 58041-0514

North Wisconsin District

Voting Ordained

Andrada, Edward Blaine; N5152 Lakeview Way, Bonduel, WI 54107-8771
 Connor, Raymond R; 9406 Woodland Dr, Weston, WI 54476-5763
 Fenske, Aric Andrew; PO Box 23, Sheldon, WI 54766-0023
 Hulke, Steven A; 104 Ford Rd, Marquette, WI 49855-9428
 Hutton, Aaron L; 425 Janet Ln, Wrightstown, WI 54180-1157
 Klug, James R; 1305 Rose Marie St Apt 2, Wausau, WI 54401-3422
 Kohn, Daniel L; 2241 Hayden Ave, Altoona, WI 54720-1548
 Larson, Michael C; 500 W College Ave, Wittenberg, WI 54499-9196
 Markworth, Gary L; 8306 2nd St, Pittsville, WI 54466
 Mathey, Michael J; 335 Leiterman Ln, Packerel, WI 54465-9321
 Pett, Paul K; 408 Manchester Dr, Green Bay, WI 54303-3313
 Pockat, Steven N; 112 E Freeborn St, Cecil, WI 54111-9211
 Roehrborn, Brian Scott; 1169 County Road D, Almond, WI 54909-9778
 Schroeder, Ryan M; 252 N Arch Ave, New Richmond, WI 54017-1204
 Schwalenberg, Mark Lynn; 316 Elm St, Athens, WI 54411-9773
 Stuenkel, Jacob Adam; PO Box 31, Glidden, WI 54527
 Triplett, Mark D; 15664 Parkland Dr, Hayward, WI 54843-6431
 Trosien, William J; 1379 Bluebird Ln, Eagle River, WI 54521-9775
 Voss, Dennis L; S9030 David Ct, Eleva, WI 54738-9422

Voting Lay

Carlson, Wayne B; 323 E Main St, Negaunee, MI 49866
 Fisher, Stephen N; 411 Drier St, Durand, WI 54736-1719
 Fleming, Sharon J; 4119 Mill Run Ct, Eau Claire, WI 54703-3883
 Garbisch, Joel D; 9026 County Rd N, Arpin, WI 54410-9715
 Juoni, Scott E; 72083 County Hwy C, High Bridge, WI 54846-6405
 Koch, Kevin D; W926 Elderberry St, Edgar, WI 54426-9710
 Krueger, Paula A; H 8734 Hwy Q, Wausau, WI 54403
 Mellem, David; 1609 Ponderosa Ave, Green Bay, WI 54313-6060
 Peters, Mark J; W6661 Green Willow Ct, Greenville, WI 54942-9609
 Rose, Martin W; 2372 20 1/4 St, Rice Lake, WI 54868-9783
 Schlundt, Eugene D; 417 Deleglise St, Antigo, WI 54409-1447
 Schroeder, John F; N 12241 City Rd Q, Downing, WI 54734
 Smith, Michael R; 11200 Kilawee Rd, Minocqua, WI 54548-9565
 Teetzen, Marlyn; 518 S Bartlett St, Shawano, WI 54166-2802
 Timm, Craig V; 150 10th St N, Wisc Rapids, WI 54494-4546
 Trost, William; N16105 Lake Shore Dr, Butternut, WI 54514
 Wilber, William; W5861 Thomas Rd, Tomahawk, WI 54487
 Williamson, Mark K; W2288 State Hwy 22, Pulcifer, WI 54124-9405
 Wilson, Keith; N1021 Sugarbush Rd, Antigo, WI 54409

Advisory Commissioned

Nelson, Christopher Carl; 415 E Le Capitaine Cir, Green Bay, WI 54302-5152

Northern Illinois District

Voting Ordained

Browne, Christopher C; 3450 N Panama Ave, Chicago, IL 60634-2923
 Buss, Allan R; 1225 E 2nd St, Belvidere, IL 61008-4523
 Croon, Michael Alan, Sr; 2155 Spruce Rd, Homewood, IL 60430-1071
 Dietrich, Joel Andrew Christensen; 1417 W Church Rd, Beecher, IL 60401-3689
 Eggebraaten, Jared A; 4038 Hennepin Dr, Joliet, IL 60431-8806

Frederich, Clifford M; 2255 Briar Ct, Hoffman Est, IL 60169-2166
 Gallup, Roger B; 2624 Oak St, River Grove, IL 60171-1647
 Greiner, Micah Dumas; 111 W Olive St, Arlington Hts, IL 60004-4766
 Gudgel, Michael R; 66 Timberline Dr, Lemont, IL 60439-3835
 Gunia, Matthew Joseph; 7423 N Milwaukee Ave, Niles, IL 60714-3707
 Hays, Jerry Don; 202 E Schaumburg Rd, Schaumburg, IL 60194-3517
 Hein, Mark H; 1512 S Briggs St, Lockport, IL 60441-4546
 Menet, David Michael; PO Box 550, Walnut, IL 61376-0550
 Metzger, William L; 515 Abbeywood Dr, Cary, IL 60013-2472
 Mueller, Charles S, Jr; 479 Pintail Ct, Bloomingdale, IL 60108-5410
 Nelson, Marcus James; 410 N Cross St, Wheaton, IL 60187-4139
 Ognoskie, Daniel F; 315 E Mazon Ave, Dwight, IL 60420-1103
 Prentice, David L, Jr; 231 W 17th St, Lombard, IL 60148-6138
 Robarge, Philip Donald; C/o Concordia Lutheran, 2645 W Belmont Ave, Chicago, IL 60618-5912
 Schauer, Caleb Joel; 6821 Main St, Union, IL 60180-9522
 Shumate, John A; 10182 W Baird St, Beach Park, IL 60087-2451
 Theiss, Terry L; PO Box 405, Pecatonica, IL 61063-0405
 Thompson, Dennis L; 3818 215th St, Matteson, IL 60443-2711
 Wagner, Steven E; 1008 E Roosevelt Rd, Lombard, IL 60148-4185
 Weinhold, Robert W; 2635 Brickville Rd, Sycamore, IL 60178
 Zickler, Matthew Leonard Gilbert; 4121 Wolf Rd, Western Sprgs, IL 60558-1451

Voting Lay

Ansorge, Howard J; 3749 N Bosworth Ave, Chicago, IL 60613-3605
 Beagley, Janice E; 1394 Cottonwood Ln, Crystal Lake, IL 60014-4020
 Bersano, Rick J; 508 Hemlock Ln, Libertyville, IL 60048-3525
 De Young, David A; 14100 Tod William Dr, Orland Park, IL 60462-2246
 Erickson, Bill; PO Box 98, Essex, IL 60935-0098
 Grimm, Robert; 25910 Sandy Knoll Dr, Channahon, IL 60410
 Harris, Steven W; 236 S Harper Ave, Glenwood, IL 60425-2054
 Heller, Jeffrey S; 1124 Tyrell Ave, Park Ridge, IL 60068-1647
 Holtzen, Byron B; 5226 Carpenter St, Downers Grove, IL 60515-4520
 Kehe, John R; 1899 Mission Hills Dr, Elgin, IL 60123-6521
 Kolupa, Chris; 805 Springfield Dr, Roselle, IL 60172
 Leise, William G; 10316 Laramie Ave, Oak Lawn, IL 60453-4617
 McGee, Ernie R; 29953 Lukens Rd, Sycamore, IL 60178-8823
 Meyerhofer, John B; 12134 Duanes Dr, Galena, IL 61036-9600
 Nelson, Chris A; 213 Stillwater Ct, Oswego, IL 60543-8047
 Neubauer, Adam; 4335 N Troy # 2 South, Chicago, IL 60618
 Pitkus, Andrea R; 1239 Deerfield Pkwy Apt 202, Buffalo Grove, IL 60089-2609
 Salvino, Dominic; 1420 Ambleside Cir, Naperville, IL 60540
 Schuette, Martin C; PO Box 29, Fulton, IL 61252-0029
 Stern, Mark O; 3525 S Cass Ct Unit 518, Oak Brook, IL 60523-3718
 Streng, Willard L; 4356 W Church Rd, Beecher, IL 60401-3585
 Studer, Jeffrey A; 1480 Allen Ln, St Charles, IL 60174-2365
 Torrenga, Helene A; 757 S Summit St, Barrington, IL 60010-4417
 Whitby, Marguerita; 102 S Derbyshire Ln, Arlington Hts, IL 60004-6712
 Woolery, Michael; 815 Greenlee Ave, Winnebago, IL 61088

Advisory Ordained

Bertels, Gary Leonard, Sr; 859 Princeton Ct, Elmhurst, IL 60126-4610
 Bussert, Mark P; 121 N Willow Rd, Elmhurst, IL 60126-2937

Advisory Commissioned

Bimler, Richard W; 336 W Hampshire Dr, Bloomingdale, IL 60108-2504
 Bower, Edward R; 284 Shipland Dr, Crystal Lake, IL 60012-3349
 Hasseldahl, Lisa M; 1124 Foxglove Ln, Marengo, IL 60152-3627
 Herman, Richard E; 414 Wisconsin Ave Apt D, Oak Park, IL 60302-3697
 Laabs, Jonathan C; 116 Cambrian Ct, Roselle, IL 60172-4782
 Laabs, June M; 116 Cambrian Ct, Roselle, IL 60172-4782
 Nordmeyer, Richard Cleo; PO Box 96, Chebanse, IL 60922-0096
 Otten, Ruth A; 9044 Sheridan Ave, Brookfield, IL 60513-1628
 Piel, Laura M; 8124 169th St Apt 1W, Tinley Park, IL 60477-6392
 Piel, Paul F; 2331 Stewart Ln, West Dundee, IL 60118-3351
 Stec, Steven J; 16311 Cherry Hill Ave, Tinley Park, IL 60487-1136

Northwest District

Voting Ordained

Banke, Brian B; 4519 112th St E, Tacoma, WA 98446-5229
 Barber, Robert G, Jr; 497 24th St Unit 1, Washougal, WA 98671-1655
 Bohlmann, Eric Christopher; 510 May St, Molalla, OR 97038-8126
 Brehmer, Steven J; 213 N Weber Rd, Deer Park, WA 99006-9027
 Dinger, Jonathan Mark; 1350 Baldy Ave, Pocatello, ID 83201-7104
 Freeman, Daniel L; 109 Germaine Dr, Chehalis, WA 98532-8600
 Hoffman, Brandt E; 1835 N 15th St, Coos Bay, OR 97420-2159
 Juergensen, Stephen P; 109 S Roosevelt St, Walla Walla, WA 99362-2432
 Koschmann, Nicholas; 1345 Hartford Dr, Forest Grove, OR 97116-2792
 Latham, Mark E; 4487 Silver Lakes Rd, Buhl, ID 83316-5143
 Luebke, Kurt E; 12322 NE 47th St, Vancouver, WA 98682-6428
 Rehder, James V; 10420 SE 11th St, Bellevue, WA 98004-6807
 Roeske, Todd; HC 60 Box 115E, Copper Center, AK 99573-9701
 Schubkegel, Kevin L; 301 S 18th St, Mount Vernon, WA 98274-4660
 Shaver, Ross Patrick; 412 Nectarine St, Nampa, ID 83686
 Shearier, Jeffrey E; 2345 SW 178th Ave, Beaverton, OR 97003-4456
 Squire, Mark Remington; 4498 State Route 21 N, Odessa, WA 99159-9773
 Stites, Roger E, Jr; PO Box 1021, Sequim, WA 98382-4317
 Suelzle, Daniel P; 2290 Corinthian Ct, Eugene, OR 97405-1448
 Swan, Jason; 210 27th Ave Apt 1302, Milton, WA 98354-8314

Voting Lay

Barth, Chris L; PO Box 552, Buhl, ID 83316
 Beck, Ronald R; 15308 NE 198th St, Woodinville, WA 98072
 Berg, Andrew; 23710 7th Ave W, Bothel, WA 98201
 Chambers, Bill; 3122 SE Stahlbush Island Rd, Corvallis, OR 97333-2709
 Collision, Virginia A; 44111 SE Tapp Rd, Sandy, OR 97055-6766
 Hail, Douglas L; 3429 NE Garfield St, Camas, WA 98607-1154
 Hunt, Steve; 1656 S Loggers Pond Pl Apt 17, Boise, ID 83706
 Huntwork, MaryLynn; 12959 Rd A 5 NW, Ephrata, WA 98823
 Kachmarek, Mark J; 911 NE 3rd Ave, Hillsboro, OR 97124-2322
 Kannas, Delores A; 2300 48th Ave SW, Seattle, WA 98116-2302
 Matthews, Beverly J; 6602 76th St W, Lakewood, WA 98499
 Mc Cauley, Jeffrey F; 2208 SW 349th Pl, Federal Way, WA 98023-3069
 Nufer, David E; 5500 N Windsong Cir, Palmer, AK 99645-8064
 Pletz, Rudie William; 52097 SE 8th Ct, Scappoose, OR 97056-4511
 Reis, Carol; 280 NE Rosewood St, Sublimity, OR 97385
 Stocker, Glenn C; 913 Goodlander Cir, Selah, WA 98942-9405
 Watt, Rex E; 1409 Myers Dr, Ferndale, WA 98248-8993
 Werner, James J; 5655 Solitude Dr, Idaho Falls, ID 83406
 Winkler, Ann L; 4310 S Ball Rd, Veradale, WA 99037-9104
 Wolfmuller, Charles H; 1083 SW Ironwood Dr, Grants Pass, OR 97526-6901

Advisory Ordained

Hoefler, Herbert E; 2412 NE 163rd Ave, Portland, OR 97230-5572

Advisory Commissioned

Fossum, Robert B; 2275 SW 188th Ct, Aloha, OR 97003
 Kranich, Jeffrey D; 14175 NW Cornell Rd, Portland, OR 97229-5406
 Kunkel, Dustin; 4538 NE 74th Ave, Portland, OR 97218-3818
 Scriven, James Anthony; 7505 Bern St, Anchorage, AK 99507-2737
 Vande Voort-Schwein, Amy L; 1920 E Pioneer, Puyallup, WA 98372-3518

Ohio District

Voting Ordained

Beaumont, Donald P; 30540 Willowick Dr, Willowick, OH 44095
 Coulter, Donald G; 8091 Plank Rd, Thompson, OH 44086-9537
 Greig, John E; 6135 Rings Rd, Dublin, OH 43016-6718
 Habrecht, Richard A; 2414 Kimberly Dr, Toledo, OH 43615-2741
 Herb, Daniel John; 405 Eastline Dr, Middletown, OH 45044-4954
 Hohe, John W; 114 Slate Ct, Delaware, OH 43015-4280
 Letcher, Kurt Russel; 1018 Cicero Rd, Edgerton, OH 43517-9514
 Raddatz, Mark R; 420 N Maple St, Lancaster, OH 43130-3127
 Sarraan, Ramdat Mangal; 10818 Bernard Ave, Cleveland, OH 44111-2834
 Smith, Jeffery Matthew; 28672 Bassett Rd, Westlake, OH 44145

Stuckwisch, Allen D; 315 Meadowcrest Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45231-4022
 Tritten, Eric E; 4258 Newcomer Rd, Stow, OH 44224-2802
 Witte, Keith Frederick; 8054 County Road T, Liberty Ctr, OH 43532-9735
 Zielinski, Philip Edward; 1377 Lester Rd, Valley City, OH 44280-9443

Voting Lay

Baker, Kim L; E363 St Rt 108, Holgate, OH 43527
 Bednash, Mark L; 14275 Old Pleasant Valley Rd, Middlebrg Hts, OH 44130-4925
 Concoby, Dennis W; 831 Lanark Ln, Painesville, OH 44077
 Dorsett, Joseph J; 121 Danbury Dr, Boardman, OH 44512
 Gibson, Timothy P; 18845 Range Line Rd, Bowling Green, OH 43402-9750
 Green, Kevin S; 123 N Walnut St, Yellow Spgs, OH 45387-2037
 Green, Spencer; 1655 Elliott Ave, Ashland, KY 41102
 Ludlum, Daniel E; 5108 Southminster Rd, Columbus, OH 43221-5249
 Meier, Steven F; 8450 Mansion Blvd, Mentor, OH 44060-4142
 Rohrs, Randall F; PO Box 14, Rdgville Cors, OH 43555-0014
 Rollins, Ronald W; 1216 E 362nd St, Eastlake, OH 44095-3135
 Viets, Alan; 4199 Fenton Rd, Hamilton, OH 45013
 Worst, Terry; 1708 W Main St, Newark, OH 43055-1344
 Wossilek, Gary A; 318 Roosevelt Ave, Elyria, OH 44035

Advisory Ordained

Wilson, Kevin Alan; 12030 State Route 736, Marysville, OH 43040-9550

Advisory Commissioned

Krueger, Kenneth Frederick; 2932 Thomas Dr, Silver Lake, OH 44224-3847
 Landskroener, James A; 7244 Hunters Chase, Maumee, OH 43537-9250
 Szyoka, Tammy A; 3257 W 157th St, Cleveland, OH 44111-1053

Oklahoma District

Voting Ordained

Bersche, Mark L; 11300 S Shartel Ave, Oklahoma City, OK 73170-5836
 Boster, Kory B; 832 E Creek Ave, Sallisaw, OK 74955-5016
 Brown, Gregory William; 1306 Oak Ave, Woodward, OK 73801-4451
 Christie, Ronald E; 380 Candice Dr NW, Piedmont, OK 73078-7502
 Hefta, Donald R; 400 S Country Club Rd, El Reno, OK 73036
 Rains, W R; 11908 Sundance Mountain Rd, Oklahoma City, OK 73162-1521
 Ray, William Scott; PO Box 59, Garber, OK 73738-0059
 Schroeder, Dwayne J; 11505 Windmill Rd, Oklahoma City, OK 73162-2033
 Shupe, William J; 1100 Ridgewood Rd, Bartlesville, OK 74006-4441

Voting Lay

Bergstrom, Michael; 9436 N 439 Rd, Big Cabin, OK 74332-4622
 Dodds, Mike; 1716 SW 68th St, Lawton, OK 73505-9020
 Hoeltzel, Mark A; 6109 Quail Ln, Enid, OK 73703-9335
 Kastens, Louis W, III; 18501 Auburn Meadows Dr, Edmond, OK 73012-0612
 Klein, Don; 6501 N W St, Newkirk, OK 74647-7212
 Lehenbauer, Mark A; 6507 S 75th East Ave, Tulsa, OK 74133
 Moore, Primus M; 417 N 10th St, McAlester, OK 74501-4816
 Rumsey, John C, III; 2201 Edwards Dr, Guthrie, OK 73044
 Sherry, Robert A; 7128 NW 5th St, Oklahoma City, OK 73127-5204

Advisory Ordained

Henschel, Marvin A; 7320 NW 114th St, Oklahoma City, OK 73162-2703

Advisory Commissioned

Watt, Suzanne Stewart; 2550 E 71st St, Tulsa, OK 74136-5531

Pacific Southwest District

Voting Ordained

Ahlman, Timothy Paul; 4097 E Palo Verde St, Gilbert, AZ 85296-1176
 Baker, William C; PO Box 34, Ramona, CA 92065-0034
 Christenson, Scott Eric; 1250 E Heim Ave, Orange, CA 92865-2920
 Engelhardt, Marc Timothy; 123 Paseo Marguerita, Vista, CA 92084-2550
 Francik, Douglas Darrel; 128 Green Ave, Escondido, CA 92025-6204
 Frick, Roger P; 222 N East St, Anaheim, CA 92805-3317

Gibson, Michael E; 760 Victoria St, Costa Mesa, CA 92627-2968
 Harman, Vincent Ronald; 2242 E San Marcos Dr, Yuma, AZ 85365-3219
 Harris, James C; 22130 Ottawa Rd, Apple Valley, CA 92308-6538
 Henkell, James D; 1376 Felspar St, San Diego, CA 92109-3001
 Hook, David J P; 13599 E Cienega Creek Dr, Vail, AZ 85641-9065
 Koczman, John R; 26970 Colonial Ln, Valencia, CA 91355-5116
 Larson, Daniel John; 18402 N 66th Ln, Glendale, AZ 85308-1012
 Nava, Jaime Antonio; 34215 Avenue E, Yucaipa, CA 92399-2577
 Nolte, Matthew T; 2175 Calle Lila, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360-4932
 O'Neal, Patrick Fine; C/o Mesquite Lutheran Church, 450 Turtle Back Rd, Mesquite, NV 89027-4957
 Parker, Dustin T; 13633 183rd St, Cerritos, CA 90703-8940
 Pierce, Earl J; 1664 Central Ave, Bullhead City, AZ 86442-8010
 Rhode, Jeremy David; 34381 Calle Portola, Capo Beach, CA 92624-1080
 Rosnau, Alan Paul; 5959 E Phelps Rd, Scottsdale, AZ 85254-9224
 Schaar, Christopher G; 808 N Los Robles Ave, Pasadena, CA 91104-4317
 Schmidt, Richard W; 744 Cholla Rd, Chula Vista, CA 91910-6614
 Skurla, Dale G; 1202 Green Ln Ste A, Prescott, AZ 86305-5243
 von Hindenburg, Bruce J; 3500 W Manchester Blvd Unit 15, Inglewood, CA 90305-4015
 Wenz, Paul George; 15811 Skyridge Dr, Riverside, CA 92503-5499

Voting Lay

Cecil, Andrew M; 4330 30th St Unit 316, San Diego, CA 92104-1379
 Dhuse, Jon M; 1889 W Queen Creek Rd Apt 2117, Chandler, AZ 85248-8001
 Foster, Anthony; 11126 S Harvard Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90047
 Geres, Len; 2063 Sheridan Ct, Simi Valley, CA 93065
 Grant, Andrew; 1630 N Sterling, Mesa, AZ 85207-2903
 Grose, Greg J; 15100 Old Idyllwild Rd, Banning, CA 92220-6112
 Haas, Douglas H; 2599 Still Meadow Ln, Lancaster, CA 93536
 Hilfiker, Richard; 1447 Vencil Rd, Holtville, CA 92250-9738
 Hittinger, Wayne; 4309 Cedar Ave, El Monte, CA 91732-1832
 Holk, Richard P; 9844 Hampshire St, Reh Cucamonga, CA 91730-3623
 Hunt, Christina; 17812 Quintana Ln, Huntington Beach, CA 92647
 Jaacks, John W; 3310 Seaclaire Dr, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275
 Johansen, Robert C; 16733 Kettenburg Ln, Moreno Valley, CA 92551
 Kunkee, Mark W; PO Box 152786, San Diego, CA 92195-2786
 Kurtz, Linda M; 2700 S Town Center, Las Vegas, NV 89135
 Lane, Gerald C; 14402 Chere Dr, Whittier, CA 90604
 Mietzner, David J; 398 Otsego Ct, Henderson, NV 89012-4862
 Morriss, Gary; 7032 W Jenan Dr, Peoria, AZ 85345
 Peterson, Jeff; 32605 Womsi Rd, Pauma Valley, CA 92061
 Radke, Jeff; 1427 Stratford St, Brea, CA 92821-2170
 Radloff, Alan L; PO Box 26144, Prescott Vly, AZ 86312-6144
 Sweitzer, Ruth E; 3908 Ashborne Ln, Moorpark, CA 93021
 Swetlishoff, Derrick N; 1821 W Aloe Vera Dr, Phoenix, AZ 85085
 Wauffe, Victoria; 947 Stiles Ct, Vista, CA 92083-3301
 Weingarth, Glenn; 9161 Loma St, Vila Park, CA 92861

Advisory Ordained

Cuen, Eduardo; 9502 Millergrove Dr, Santa Fe Spgs, CA 90670-2743
 Irey, Lance A; 2879 Alanzo Ln, Costa Mesa, CA 92626-4203
 Smith, Gary L; 8941 W Wedgewood Dr, Peoria, AZ 85382-3530

Advisory Commissioned

Beyer, Gary A; 5029 E Almond Ave Apt 1, Orange, CA 92689-4248
 Fitzgerald, Lucas Michael; 7477 E Calle Durango, Anaheim, CA 92808
 Garcia, Jorge E; 9324 Robinson Ln, Corona, CA 92883-9247
 Kolander, Eugene E; 15740 W Edgemont Ave, Goodyear, AZ 85395-8125
 Moritz, Todd J; 6583 E Via Estrada, Anaheim, CA 92807-4226
 Schulteis, Donald H; 1655 W Lisbon St, Upland, CA 91784-7458
 Sims, Carolyn C; 27042 Pinjara Cir, Mission Viejo, CA 92691-4444

Rocky Mountain District

Voting Ordained

Cundiff, Quintin Michael; 3739 Cattle Dr NE, Rio Rancho, NM 87144-6363
 Daeke, Duane O; PO Box 727, Paonia, CO 81428
 Flamme, Anthony Brian; 3034 S Olathe Way, Aurora, CO 80013-1940
 Groth, Theodore W; 8732 Quigley St, Westminster, CO 80031-6927
 Hatteberg, Kurt Thomas; PO Box 54, Amherst, CO 80721-0054
 Heimer, Stephen Erich; 716 Horncastle Rd, El Paso, TX 79907-4710
 Manweiler, John; 2260 Red Cliffs Dr, Saint George, UT 84790-8153
 Maxwell, James Barret; PO Box 6934, Colorado Spgs, CO 80934-6934
 Packer, Andrew Loren; 861 Meadows Dr, Pagosa Spgs, CO 81147-7625
 Peck, Kent A; 4693 Dover St, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033-3127
 Stoltenow, Bradley R; 1371 Beacon Hill Dr, Hghlnds Ranch, CO 80126-3050
 Stults, Don Alan; 253 Davis St, Monte Vista, CO 81144-1022
 Weiss, Stephen Thomas; 652 54th Ave, Greeley, CO 80634-4441
 Young, Victor P; 6790 Monaco St, Commerce City, CO 80022-2875

Voting Lay

Aden, Adam; 1070 Washington St, Craig, CO 81625
 Behnken, James; 1605 Monte Largo Dr NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112
 Dommers, Richard W; PO Box 117, La Luz, NM 88337
 Elwood, Steven L; PO Box 167, Starton, CO 80836
 Giovanetto, Jamie L; PO Box 271027, Louisville, CO 80027-5018
 Helmkamp, Robert E; 9838 E Tom Tom Dr, Parker, CO 80138
 Kopff, Christian E; 1331 Kennedy Ave, Louisville, CO 80027-1043
 Krueckeberg, Harry F; 301 Mount Meeker Dr, Loveland, CO 80537-7241
 Paulsen, Chris A; 5705 W 86th Ave, Arvada, CO 80003-1367
 Pugh, Donal E; 39606 County Road 16, Holyoke, CO 80734-9550
 Seaman, Richard; 222 S 950 W, Tooele, UT 84075
 Smith, Wayne; PO Box 626, Farwell, TX 79325-0626
 Tisdale, Aaron M; 6110 Katy Ct, Colorado Spgs, CO 80922-1817
 Tuell, James A; 8860 Forrest Dr, Hghlnds Ranch, CO 80126-5015

SELC District

Voting Ordained

Arp, Wally M; 1209 Winter Springs Blvd, Winter Spgs, FL 32708-3716
 Biber, Paul R; 766 Chevron Dr, St Louis, MO 63125-5206
 Bocklage, Stephen Francis; 1349 W Atlantic St, Emporia, VA 23847-2863
 Telloni, John L; 1034 Irvington Ave NE, Massillon, OH 44646-4424

Voting Lay

Berent, Matthew K; 1348 Hall Ave, Sharon, PA 16146-3534
 Hale, William E; 2741 Harding Ave Apt 116, Granite City, IL 62040
 Schultz, Larry A; 1566 Bushkill Center Rd, Bath, PA 18014-9527
 Sinninger, Kathleen; 217 Capri Cove Pl, Sanford, FL 32771-8394

South Dakota District

Voting Ordained

Andraesen, Jordon Matthew; PO Box 506, Wagner, SD 57380-0506
 Christopher, Thomas D; PO Box 126, Alexandria, SD 57311-0126
 Nix, Matthew William; 6205 N Purple Martin Ave, Sioux Falls, SD 57107-1120
 Redhage, Lloyd W; PO Box 16, Andover, SD 57422-0016
 Soyk, Kenneth A; 204 W Cherry St, Parkston, SD 57366-2287
 Sturzenbecher, Randy R; 8605 Woodland Dr, Black Hawk, SD 57718
 Welton, Adam J; PO Box 205, Presho, SD 57568-0205
 Wurm, Matthew E; 621 9th Ave, Brookings, SD 57006-1523

Voting Lay

Baumann, Guy W; 24133 461st Ave, Chester, SD 57016-7416
 Bettmann, Darwin H; 2519 136th St SW, Aberdeen, SD 57401-8628
 Borkowski, Ralph J; 485 57th St SE, Huron, SD 57350-7992
 Christiansen, Alan; 2413 N Canyon St, Spearfish, SD 57783

Melstad, Dennis; 291 Bluestem Trl, Dakota Dunes, SD 57049-5209
 Mueller, Howard W; 207 S Viola St, Milbank, SD 57252-2119
 Titze, Davyd E; 506 N Foster St, Mitchell, SD 57301-3040
 Zuercher, David L; 104 Lee Hill Rd, Pierre, SD 57501-4810

Advisory Commissioned

Ockander, Marli M; 7121 W 56th St Apt 75, Sioux Falls, SD 57106-7567

South Wisconsin District

Voting Ordained

Amen, Christopher Michael; PO Box 229, Arlington, WI 53911-0229
 Bender, Harold J, Jr; 2367 S 118th St, West Allis, WI 53227-1805
 Bender, Peter C; 4200 Elmwood Rd, Colgate, WI 53017-9702
 Bergelin, Darrel L; W2780 State Hwy 32, Howards Grove, WI 53083-5236
 Billings, Steven Stewart; 300 Broad St, Menasha, WI 54952-3045
 Brandt, Charles E; 261 White Tail Dr, Sun Prairie, WI 53590-3328
 Crane, Brian Trevor; 1061 S Dixie Ct, Adams, WI 53910-9717
 Czaplewski, Daniel P; 2862 N 53rd St, Milwaukee, WI 53210-1613
 Fabrizius, Karl F; 7390 Hill Valley Ct, Greendale, WI 53129-2725
 Giebel, Franklin H; 219 N State St, Neshkoro, WI 54960-9501
 Gilbert, Jacob Arthur; 501 Augusta St, Racine, WI 53402-4407
 Goodwin, Robert L; W196N9525 Crossview Way, Menomonee Fls, WI 53051-1395
 Gugel, Christian F; 1614 S 23rd St, Sheboygan, WI 53081-5018
 Heath, Timmothy Warren, Jr; 37 N 3rd St, Hilbert, WI 54129-9597
 Henrichs, Michael William; 6029 N Santa Monica Blvd, Whitefish Bay, WI 53217-4660
 Klieve, John E; 217 N Freeman Dr, Prt Washington, WI 53074-2026
 Kufahl, Mark Charles; 2016 Pike Dr Apt 2, Fitchburg, WI 53713-3092
 Little, Willie Thomas, Jr; 9712 W Debbie Ln, Milwaukee, WI 53224-4620
 Meier, Mark Raymond, Sr; W2189 County Road H, Poy Sippi, WI 54967-8447
 Rajek, Cory J; 2940 Mineral Point Ave, Janesville, WI 53548-3297
 Ramirez, David Paul; 1618 Main St, Union Grove, WI 53182
 Schockman, Gary E; 208 High St, Clinton, WI 53525
 Scifferlein, Christopher M; 402 Center Ave, Adell, WI 53001-1116
 Tillmann, Gary W; N 1245 St Johns Way, Oconomowoc, WI 53066
 Wenzel, Mark A; 302 Honeycrisp Dr, Beaver Dam, WI 53916-9256
 Zahner, Douglas James; N8092 County Road AY, Mayville, WI 53050-2510

Voting Lay

Blum, Carolyn J; 911 Tara Hill E, Hartford, WI 53027
 Buehler, Robert H; 1520 Vogt Dr Apt 18, West Bend, WI 53095-5511
 Burfeind, John D; 9600 N Lake Dr, Bayside, WI 53217-6100
 Gehrke, Jason; 2219 S 82nd St, West Allis, WI 53219
 Heitmann, Paul C; 345 N Perry Pkwy, Oregon, WI 53575-1432
 Klawitter, Michael; N2506 State Road 49, Berlin, WI 54923
 Konetzki, Alan R; 4519 Hunters Glen Dr, Sheboygan, WI 53083-1763
 Kuntz, William R; N7031 State Road 26, Juneau, WI 53039-9614
 Lemke, Gregg P; 145 S Harrison St Apt 3, Lancaster, WI 53813-1686
 McCumber, Timothy B; S8161 Kassner Rd Unit 1, Merrimac, WI 53561-9432
 Menden, George; 348 Evelyn Ave, Delafield, WI 53018-1717
 Moe, Jason N; 11409 W Hansen Rd, Evansville, WI 53536-8821
 Morgan, Malcolm L; 3057 N 55th St, Milwaukee, WI 53210
 Nohr, Donald E; 2628 Austin Pl, Beloit, WI 53511-2301
 Nygaard, Brian J; 1428 Nevada Ct, Sheboygan, WI 53081-5757
 Perkins, Edward A; 4486 N White Hawk Dr, Appleton, WI 54913-8168
 Peters, Mark J; 1549 Ostergaard Ave, Racine, WI 53406-4539
 Senn, Robert J; 11307 W 7 Mile Rd, Franksville, WI 53126-9729
 Sitzman, Ronald S; 24228 Fish And Game Rd, Kiel, WI 53042-2346
 Smedal, Nick; 3519 Lusan Dr, Cedarburg, WI 53012-9483
 VanEss, Bill; 2906 S Cedar Ave, Holmen, WI 54636-9192
 Vlach, William L; 1015 N 33rd St, Milwaukee, WI 53208-3235
 Voight, Richard; N1802 15th Ave, Wautoma, WI 54982
 Walther, Todd W; 8410 207th Ave, Bristol, WI 53104-9153

REGISTERED DELEGATES AND REPRESENTATIVES

Weinhold, Dennis D; N3507 North Ave, Cascade, WI 53011-1508

Wilant, Daniel B; 3537 S 2nd St, Milwaukee, WI 53207-3237

Advisory Ordained

Feldscher, Daniel R; 8812 Mary Dr, Mt Pleasant, WI 53406-3124
Meier, Ronald W; 4977 Stevens Ln, Oshkosh, WI 54904-6853

Advisory Commissioned

Fick, Jeffrey A; 802 Crestwood Dr, Waukesha, WI 53188-4448
Hintz, Gretchen A; N7468 4th Dr, Westfield, WI 53964-8154
Jacoby, Douglas J; PO Box 449, Fox Lake, WI 53933-0449
Ladendorf, Gene W; 865 W Autumn Path Ln, Bayside, WI 53217-1605
Mercier, Gary L; 749 Homestead Trl, Grafton, WI 53024-1160
Pickelmann, Jonathon H; 980 Bartlett Dr, Oconomowoc, WI 53066-3457

Southeastern District**Voting Ordained**

Alms, Paul Gregory; PO Box 187, Catawba, NC 28609-0187
Bean, Matthew D; 9400 Redbridge Rd, N Chesterfld, VA 23236-3566
Campbell, Braun Christian; 7518 Havelock St, Springfield, VA 22150-3919
Coats, Roy Axel; 4213 Vermont Ave, Baltimore, MD 21229-3517
Drosendahl, John Charles; 101 N Martin Rd, Goldsboro, NC 27530-7790
Ellis, Garet Michael; 26 Acorn Cir Apt 101, Towson, MD 21286-3865
Fair, John W; C/o Ebenzer Lutheran Church, 310 S Tremont Dr, Greensboro, NC 27403-1739
Gann, Jaim E; 12818 10th St, Bowie, MD 20720-3651
Gehrke, Wesley A; 9621 Chesapeake Blvd Apt W4E, Norfolk, VA 23503-1814
Less, Keith G; 108 Cedarwood Dr, Galena, MD 21635-1527
Linthicum, Eric Rodger; 13229 Clifton Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20904-3249
Ludwig, David J; 1974 12th Street Pl NE, Hickory, NC 28601-1649
Martin, Kevin W; 1500 Glenwood Ave, Raleigh, NC 27608-2338
Mc Clean, Charles Louis; 4 Upland Rd Apt 21, Baltimore, MD 21210-2273
Ogne, Christopher M; 7365 Indian Head Hwy, Bryans Road, MD 20616-3237
Olson, Thomas L; 1540 Golf Course Rd, Columbus, NC 28722-5424
Sizemore, Paul C; PO Box 7, Irmo, SC 29063-0007
Sorenson, Matthew D; 1003 2nd Avenue Ext, Farmville, VA 23901-2204
Stottliemyer, William K; 3740 Resley Rd, Hancock, MD 21750-1717
Stout, Christopher T; 103 N Little Texas Rd, Kannapolis, NC 28083-6349
Wiechmann, Ralph E; 43115 Waxpool Rd, Broadlands, VA 20148

Voting Lay

Boraas, Russel L; 15843 Greenwood Church Rd, Montpelier, VA 23192
Brauch, Gilbert M F, Jr; 4142 Wandering Ln NE, Hickory, NC 28601-8776
Christians, Corey; 1524 Court Cir, Newton, NC 28658
Ciancia, Daniel M; 205 Shadow Creek Ln, Anderson, SC 29621-2090
Elgert, Elizabeth H; 103 Carnoustie, Williamsburg, VA 23188-7423
Fletcher, Larry R; 311 Fashion Cir, Newark, DE 19711-2426
Hankins, Gary W; 14035 Canal Rd SE, Cumberland, MD 21502-6420
Harwood, Karen; 14818 London Towne Sq, Centreville, VA 20120-1840
Heilman, Jon; 1304 Mcpherson Ct, Lutherville, MD 21093-5508
Henderson, Don; 1421 Revere Rd, Winston Salem, NC 27103-4843
Kaetzel, Lawrence J; 86 Dolomite Dr, York, PA 17408
Kiser, Mark A; PO Box 56, Denver, SC 28037-0056
Klanderma, Eric; 13228 Pearsall Ln, Fairfax, VA 22033
Mason, James M; 218 Saratoga Ln, New Bern, NC 28562-4860
Meyerhoff, Stanley; 8147 Indiantown Rd, King George, VA 22485
Post, Barry; 105 Dundalk Way, Cary, NC 27511-5053
Randow, Charles; 1414 Belt St, Baltimore, MD 21230
Schumpert, Frank; 21 Aspen Ct, Elgin, SC 29045-9489
Walls, George; 6821 Crofton Colony Ct, Crofton, MD 21114-3276
Wesley, Allena L; 1410 Village Green Dr, Landover, MD 20785-4436

Advisory Ordained

Maack, Roy A; 2102 Lark Ct, Oviedo, FL 32765-5209
Seaman, William D; 5101 Duckdown Ct, Raleigh, NC 27604-6103

Advisory Commissioned

Bauer, Troy William Ferdinand; 1310 Whitman Dr, Glen Burnie, MD 21061-4124
Bidwell, Jacob B; 414 Woodlake Ct Apt F, Glen Burnie, MD 21061-5931
Lennox, Debra Lynn; 206 High School Ave, Georgetown, DE 19947-1816
Mantey, Megan F; 100 W Lochmere Dr, Cary, NC 27518

Southern District**Voting Ordained**

Boldt, Louis Alfred; 11143 Martin Ln, Tickfaw, LA 70466-3507
Cole, Christopher L; 333 Commerce St, Pensacola, FL 32507-3422
Endrihs, James Edward; 103 Woodland Dr, Enterprise, AL 36330-1848
Lattimore, Warren L; 1625 Annette St, New Orleans, LA 70116-1322
Leigeber, Joshua Paul; 120 Alexandria Hwy, Leesville, LA 71446-2987
Leigeber, Paul A; 2212 Club House Dr, Lillian, AL 36549-5412
Mac Kain, David Elliott; 4648 N Gloster Apt 4A, Tupelo, MS 38804
Ninke, John Howard; 903 Bellemeade St SW, Hartselle, AL 35640-5012
Washington, Steven; 515 Fleetwood Dr, Selma, AL 36701-4884

Voting Lay

Held, Eric H; 324 Sagewood Dr, Ridgeland, MS 39157-2527
Holland, Michael J; 202 Chopin Dr, Bassier City, LA 71112
Kringel, Kimberly; 9045 Dawes Creek Dr, Theodore, AL 36582
Lawson, Harold L; 2222 Viscount Dr NW, Huntsville, AL 35810-4332
Myers, Willis R; 6429 Hickorywood Dr, Milton, FL 32570
Schenck, Linda; 24227 Oalmann Rd E, Bush, LA 70431
Watson, Aaron P; 6749 West End Blvd, New Orleans, LA 70124-2244
Weiland, Peg; 4800 Montevallo Rd, Birmingham, AL 35210
Wind, Michael P; 57 Daytona St, Miramar Beach, FL 32550-8602

Southern Illinois District**Voting Ordained**

Ball, Benjamin T; 6969 W Frontage Rd, Worden, IL 62097-2431
Clayton, Kirk M; 104 W State St, Mascoutah, IL 62258-1925
Hoem, Josemon Thomas; 597 Stave Rd, Murphysboro, IL 62966
Hofferber, Mark James; 1130 Nassau Dr, Edwardsville, IL 62025-5128
Ill, Peter W; 503 E Washington St, Millstadt, IL 62260-1231
Kornacki, Alan R, Jr; PO Box 234, Campbell Hill, IL 62916-0234
Nebel, Mark A; 311 N Main St, Red Bud, IL 62278-1022
Niermann, Scott Allen; 12903 Clara St, Carlyle, IL 62231-3837
Prumm, Christen Edward; 22009 E 19th Rd, Nokomis, IL 62075-3719
Stallworth, Willie P, Sr; 6160 Lucille Ave, St Louis, MO 63136-4839
Wood, Eric R; 206 E Schumacher St, Okawville, IL 62271-2212

Voting Lay

Blotevogel, Walter D; 239 W Kell St, Worden, IL 62097-1025
Boehne, Curtis W; 21324 Sycamore Rd, Hoyleton, IL 62803-1202
Hutchinson, Donald J; 981 Weathervane Ln, Troy, IL 62294-3139
Johnson, Derek; 23204 E 24th Rd, Nokomis, IL 62075-3836
Keller, Brian J; 703 E 2nd St, O Fallon, IL 62269-2216
Langrehr, Robert; 13237 Eagle Rd, Nashville, IL 62263-2803
Mueller, Brad; 507 W German St, Chester, IL 62233
Mueller, Jeffrey D; 7804 State Route 156, New Athens, IL 62264-2606
Sramek, Leslie K; 1219 W Main St, Mascoutah, IL 62258
Trammell, George; 200 Westernaire Dr, Marion, IL 62959-4817
Trisler, Randy Wade; 20507 Dabbs N Rd, Jerseyville, IL 62052

Advisory Ordained

Mitkos, Leslie J, Jr; 908 W Pearl St, Staunton, IL 62088-1323

Advisory Commissioned

Baginski, John C; 110 Delores Ln, Sparta, IL 62286-1910
Becker, William Festus; 1116 Teal Dr, Red Bud, IL 62278-2420
Lukomski, Lynn C; 900 Belsha St, New Athens, IL 62264-1502
Roth, Daniel C; 110 Foxbrush Dr, Belleville, IL 62221-4563

Texas District**Voting Ordained**

Andrajack, Joseph P, Jr; 7106 Pace St, Amarillo, TX 79108-5848
Beck, Dustin Mead; 1529 Casa De Oro Dr, Corp Christi, TX 78411-3313
Bogs, Ronald Allen; 1510 Anvil Dr, Houston, TX 77090-2114
Bramich, Christopher J; 1500 FM 156 S, Haslet, TX 76052-4030
Cain, John William; 9615 Oldenburg Ln, Houston, TX 77065-4434
Cummins, Brian K; 1404 Rockdale Dr, Arlington, TX 76018-2037
Davis, John F, Jr; 5810 3rd St, Katy, TX 77493-2425
Eckert, Allan C; 3302 Canyon Creek Dr, San Angelo, TX 76904-6918
Gonzalez, Eloy Steven; 2505 W Northgate Dr, Irving, TX 75062-3264
Hill, Nathaniel Wade; 704 Frio St, Winchester, TX 78945-5235
Hintze, Kevin John; 6001 Fm 1105, Georgetown, TX 78626-1745
Jacobs, Matthew P; 140 New Wedem Rd, Brenham, TX 77833-8106
Jarrett, James C; 408 Redbud Dr, Forney, TX 75126-9651
Kaiser, Paul Matthew; 508 S Wells St, Edna, TX 77957-3741
Kitson, Robert Joseph; 264 County Road 143, Riesel, TX 76682-3752
Knippa, William B; 12505 Red Mesa Holw, Austin, TX 78739-7535
Leeland, David A; 19011 Village Dogwood Ct, Houston, TX 77084-4674
Mashburn, Joe Q; 2317 W Park Row Blvd, Corsicana, TX 75110-4988
Mittelstadt, Richard Alan; 815 Saint James, Seguin, TX 78155-7143
Murillo, David J; 4006 Chinkapin Oak, San Antonio, TX 78223-2348
Ochsner, Timothy L; 8 Goldman Ln, Lampasas, TX 76550-3611
Pase, Robert J; 2825 Emerson Pl, Midland, TX 79705-4202
Raddatz, John F; 14510 Kings Head Dr, Houston, TX 77044-5072
Reeves, Sean D; 303 N Avenue O, Olney, TX 76374-1307
Richardson, James Martin, Jr; 7325 Windhaven Rd, N Richlnd Hls, TX 76182-7625
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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.

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C: Timothy Scharr (SI);
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VOM: Steven Briel (MNS); Steven Washington (SO); Keith Witte (OH);
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Committee 8: Parochial Schools

C: Dean Nadasy (MNS);
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Committee 9: Finance

C: Daniel May (IN);
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Committee 10: Stewardship: Funding the Mission

C: Dwayne Lueck (NW);
DP: **Vice chair:** Andrew Dzurowcik (SELC);
VOM: Kenneth Bomberger (MI); David Kuhfal (NEB); Derek Roberts (MDS);
VL: Jason Gehrke (SW); Timothy Gibson (OH); Loren Johnson (IW);
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Committee 11: Structure & Administration

C: Terry Cripe (OH);
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ACM: Mark Bender (MO).

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VL: Eric Held (SO); Jon Kohlmeier (IE); Craig Timm (NW);
ACM: Martha Milas (CI).

Committee 13: Routes to Ministry

C: Roger Paavola (MDS);
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VL: Donal Pugh (RM); George Trammell (SI);
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Committee 14: Church & Culture

C: Terry Forke (MT);
DP: **Vice chair:** John Denninger (SE); Anthony Steinbronn (NJ);
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VL: Alan Brodbeck (NEB); Paul Lagemann (EN);
AOM: John Pless (IN);
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Committee 15: Reformation

C: Peter Lange (KS);
DP: **Vice chair:** Scott Sailer (SD);
VOM: Mark Bersche (OK); Dallas Dubke (CNH); Kevin Martin (SE); Richard Serina, Jr. (NJ);
VL: David Mietzner (PSW);
ACM: Ashley Jensen (KS).

Committee 16: Family, Youth & Young Adults

C: Timothy Yeadon (NE);
DP: **Vice chair:** Robert Newton (CNH);
VOM: Raymond Connor (NW); Justin Panzer (KS); Jay Winters (FG); Philip Zielinski (OH);
VL: Rebecca Mayes (MO);

AOM: Jacob Gilbert (SW);
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Committee 17: Preaching & Church Worker Continuing Education

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Committee 18: Worker Wellness

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VL: Jeffery Albright (FG);
ACM: Betsy Karkan (NI).

Committee 19: Registration, Credentials & Elections

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DP: **Vice chair:** Chris Wicher (EA);
VOM: Paul Biber (SELC); Bradley Stoltenow (RM); David Zirpel (IW);
VL: Jon Dhuse (PSW); Jay Meyer (KS);
ACM: Caren Vogt (NJ).

Committee 20: Committee for Convention Nominations

(Committee 20 Legend: C = Chairman; O = Ordained Minister; L = Layperson).

C: Ronald Garwood (WY);
O: **Vice chair:** Russell Sommerfeld (NEB);
Secretary: Martin Noland (IN); Roger Gallup (NI); Dennis Heiden (MNS); Marvin Henschel (OK); William Meyer (AT); Mark Miller (CI); Dale Sattgast (SD); Dennis Coerber (NOW); Lee Dreyer (IW); William Gaik (FG); Gregory Miller (MO); Thelma Myers (SELC); David Piehler (NW); Richard Parker (CNH); Stan Weir (SO).

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OFFICER, BOARD, AND COMMISSION REPORTS

R1

No Confession, No Faith

President's Report

Upon This Rock

Is there reason for hope? Yes! By faith in Jesus, we stand upon an immovable, eternal *Rock*. Christ posed a question to his disciples, "But you, who do you say that I am?" Peter answered for them all, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Jesus responded, "Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:15ff.).

In short, since the Keys (the power to speak the effective Law and Gospel and administer the Sacraments) are given here to Peter on behalf of all the apostles, and elsewhere to the whole church (Matt. 18:17–20), our Lutheran Confessions state "certainly the Church has not been built upon the authority of a man. Rather it has been built upon the ministry of the confession Peter made, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (Treatise 25). We have a sure rock in the Gospel, in Baptism, in Absolution, in the Supper. This means we have eternal life *now*, in the face of a world gone nuts, and we base our lives and very existence upon the Rock which is Christ and His forgiveness unto eternal life.

But what do you make of Jesus?

Our text poses to us a profound truth about the Christian faith and life. It is a confession of who Jesus is. It is also a confession of who we are, both as sinners and as joy-filled forgiven people who praise the Savior. In discussion with nonbelievers and wavering Christians, I always try to pull the discussion around to one question: But what do you make of Jesus? The word *confession* is a profound and rich term in the Bible, and it answers this very question. Its fundamental meaning is "to say the same thing" (*homo-logein*). Among its many nuances, three uses stand out:

1. Confession of sin
2. Confession of Christ, our Savior from sin, before God and to all the world
3. Confession as praise and thanksgiving

When we "confess," we say back to God what He has told us about Himself and about ourselves!

No Sin, No Savior

Confession of sin. "And they were baptized by John in the River Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mark 1:5). "But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9; cf. Heb. 11:13; Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5; Acts 19:18). "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another ..." (James 5:16). Simply put, only sinners need a Savior. Confessing our own sin puts us in a position of dependence upon our Savior and of humility with respect to every other Christian and non-Christian in the world. At the end of the day, there are only two ways to go through life—either "God be merciful to me a sinner," or "I thank Thee Lord that I'm not like others." It's either repentant tax collector or self-righteous Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14). No middle ground. When Jesus told officials He was the "cornerstone," the stone the builders rejected, He said, "And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him" (Matt. 21:42–44). The Law is a necessary hammer and necessary precisely in order to serve the Gospel.

Confession of the Christ before God and all the world. "He who confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord [the context demonstrates that this means 'Jesus is Yahweh'] and believes in his heart that God raised him from the dead, will be saved" (Rom. 10:9–10). The heart believes and the mouth speaks. Sadly, Judas "confessed" agreement to the price of thirty pieces of silver to betray the Messiah (Luke 22:6). His mouth confessed the content of his heart. In many cases in the New Testament, this word to "confess" is tantamount to and paralleled with "bearing witness" to who Jesus is—namely, God in the flesh come to save the world (1 John 4:2). "This is the witness of John ... He confessed and did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ.' ... The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:19f.). Jesus Himself "bore witness" and "made the good confession before Pilate" (1 Tim. 6:12–13). Read the story of the woman at the well who went out and "witnessed" to her fellow Samaritans, and they "believed because of her testimony" (John 4:39). The writer to the Hebrews says, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." And what is it? The writer continues with a marvelous confession of our Savior's humanity and divinity, for us. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14ff.).

As you have time, read through these many passages which tie "confession" with eternal life (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9f.; 1 John 2:23), hope (Heb. 10:23), God's own confession of fidelity to us (Acts 7:17), confession of Christ before authorities (Acts 24:14), fighting "the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12ff.), and rejecting false teaching about Jesus (1 John 4:2). The New Testament squarely and firmly urges Christians to clearly confess who Jesus is and what He means for the world. God help us to do that! And our "Rock" is "Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). But there's more.

Joy

"If the love of God has touched your heart, please inform your face!" The New Testament quickly moves from the confession of the content of the faith to the joyous confession of God's glory and praise! Jesus leads the way. "I *confess* [always translated 'praise'] you father that you have hidden this from the wise and revealed it to babes" (Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21). Paul's magnificent confession of Jesus as God in the flesh moves from the great truth of the incarnation to the church's praise throughout the ages. "Though He was in the form of God ... He humbled Himself by becoming subject to death, even death on a cross ... so that every tongue *confess* that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:6, 11). Paul tells the Corinthians that their material aid "flowed" from their "*confession of the Gospel of Christ*" and would result in much thanksgiving and praise (2 Cor. 9:11f.). Finally, what astounding texts we have for unity ("why do you despise your brother? ... every tongue shall confess to God"; Rom. 14:10f.) and joy and praise for mission: "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. As it is written, 'Therefore I will praise [confess] You among the Gentiles and sing to Your name. ... Rejoice, O Gentiles!'" And Paul ends the section with hope. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in *hope*" (Rom. 15:8ff.). Wow! This is why it was said of the apostles after they were persecuted, "Then they left ... rejoicing that

they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:41).

Confession of sin, confession of the faith, and praise belong together. To the extent these three mark our lives as people, a church body, and a convention, we shall experience many blessings. Sinners all, let's repent together and welcome and love one another as fellow sinners redeemed. Let's hold to the strong confession of Christ's teaching and bear witness to it that we may join Jesus in His mission "to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). And may God mercifully grant us hearts burning with joy and praise as we confess Him publicly, come what may!

"The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge. ... I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised" (Psalm 18:2-3).

Using the model of Luther's *A Simple Way to Pray*, please pray with me the following prayer:

- I. Lord, You **instruct** us in this text that you are our rock and refuge. And you desire that we trust in You and call upon You and praise You.
- T. I **thank** you that Your holy Word is so very clear and that You delight in Your children looking to You for comfort, refuge, and praise.
- C. I **confess** that I have had many doubts and fears about my life and about the church in these last days. I've been lazy at prayer. I don't know the psalms like I ought. Worse, I have often failed to call upon You for refuge, and my worship and praise have faltered.
- P. I **pray**, Lord, that You would forgive me my many sins. Cause me to love and trust Your blessed Word and many promises. Help me grow in the knowledge of Your Word. Cause my life to be one of endless thanksgiving and praise to You. In Your holy name I pray. Amen.

"The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost"
(Luke 19:10)

We exist to serve Jesus' mission to those who do not know him. All of us as spiritual priests have the great privilege of sharing the Gospel with those around us in our everyday lives. Whether laypersons or preachers or apostles, the people who encountered Jesus spread the word! Note the woman at the well: "Many Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony" (John 4:39). Note also the Gadarene: "The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with Him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.' And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him" (Luke 8:38f.)

"Every One His Witness." A comprehensive evangelism effort! It's time to seriously "up our game" in the matter of reaching the lost. God calls unbelievers into His kingdom, and he gives us the unbelievable blessing of doing it through us. Below in the Office of National Mission reports, please carefully read the section in the report from the Chief Mission Officer (CMO) on our new evangelism emphasis and program, "Every One His Witness." We are delighted that it is being received so well! You will hear more at the convention.

**Demythologizing the Mission:
The Brutal Facts of the LCMS Forty-Year Decline**

Folks, the LCMS has been declining for some forty years. No LCMS district has shown any increase in the number of the baptized in nearly twenty years. A couple of years back, I requested our internal Rosters and Statistics people do a thorough study on the performance of each district over the past forty years, with a focus especially upon the last decade. While districts vary in the percentage of decline, the trend line for all of them is the same. It's even the case in the two largest districts (Texas and Michigan), which have planted the most congregations over the past forty years. We noted that the decline of the two Iowa districts was identical from 2002 to

2012. This was intriguing because Iowa East tends to be quite conservative and Iowa West less so. This and other factors has led me to believe that our decline could hardly be pegged to closed Communion or worship practices, much less our doctrine or our biblical positions on social issues.

We commissioned two more very thorough demographic studies, which actually looked at the LCMS presence in every county of the United States. We have gleaned an enormous amount of information that will be very helpful in our mission to reach the lost. The second study noted something I find remarkable. Last year, it took the Southern Baptists 47 adult members to gain one new adult convert. For the same period, it took the LCMS only 44 adult members to gain one new adult member! The Mormons are at the top in outreach, gaining one new convert for every 40 adult members. **Who would have thought that the LCMS would have stronger outreach than the Southern Baptists!** But the following information is very sobering. Even if by some miracle of divine grace, we were to up our evangelistic efforts to equal the Mormons, *the additional members gained would only stem the decline for one year in two larger districts of the LCMS.*

The third demographic study really honed in on the landscape of the US with respect to the birth rate. Americans, and particularly European-descent Americans (95 percent of the LCMS), are not having children at even the replacement rate of 2.1 per family. The year 1959 saw the largest number of LCMS births and Baptisms. Last year's number of LCMS births was down some 70 percent from 1959. Society has changed. Marriage is delayed. Education comes first. Debt affects marriage and families. Delaying marriage and child rearing means far fewer children. Children are very expensive. There is much, much more that is affecting the LCMS that we will share.

After the third study was done, I asked for just a little more information. I asked for a county-by-county report on the birth rates for each district area of the LCMS. Guess what? *The district/state with the highest birth rate in the past ten years (South Dakota), happened to be the best performing district of the LCMS (only a 4 percent decline from 2002-2012).* New Jersey had the lowest birth rate over the past decade, and the district accordingly showed the greatest losses over ten years (33 percent). What's more, **the performance of each district lines up almost exactly with the birth rate of each area.**

Some are crying foul, that we are letting these facts be known as though we are intent on foregoing evangelism and prohibiting birth control. Some are claiming that we are simply providing excuses or are intent on some sort of legalism, such as telling people they have to have more kids. **Pure nonsense!** The Catholics prohibit birth control and their birth rate is the same as ours. In Jim Collins's outstanding book *From Good to Great*, he says the first step in moving from a good to a great organization is to "acknowledge the brutal facts." The brutal fact is that the growth of the LCMS has overwhelmingly occurred via childbirth. The brutal fact is, we could elevate our evangelism performance to that of the Mormons, and we would still be looking at numerical decline in 33 of our 35 districts. Sober facts. **These are not excuses. These are facts.** I have raised this issue so that we can together make informed and wise decisions about our mission today in this nation. I'm done with myths. Adult conversions are a very significant secondary factor in the growth or decline of the Synod. Adult conversions mirror births and Baptisms in part because these conversions very often happen as a result of a marriage or childbirth. Outreach is vital.

This information should cause us all to be very circumspect on the convention floor, where it's common to hear that "we are declining [for this or that reason], so we should pass [or not pass] this overture." We are sharing these facts so that we can begin to address real issues, not myths. The fact is, we have fought, blamed, and cajoled

one another over myths, not facts. And we have virtually ignored the issues of marriage and family throughout the period of our very decline because of these issues. The Bible has some good stuff to say about these issues, and it's time for us to have a good look at it.

These “brutal facts” make **Witness** (reaching the lost), **Mercy** (finding specific ways for each congregation to care for those inside and outside while witnessing to Jesus), and **Life Together** (making congregations healthier places and continuing to get our synodical, doctrinal, financial, and educational house together). We must continue to concentrate heavily upon

1. evangelism and outreach;
2. reinvigorating congregations and assisting struggling congregations;
3. healthy workers;
4. intentional outreach to immigrant populations;
5. church planting; and
6. resolution of internal issues which cause conflict.

The Domestic Challenges and Opportunities

The “nones,” those 20 percent of all adults and 30 percent of Millennials who have no religious affiliation whatsoever, are not unified in their religious and social views. The famous 2012 study from the Pew Research Center showed that fully one-third of the “nones” are seeking church membership and hold traditional views on the social issues. The Pew report noted that the Anglo population of the US continues to grow (though many rural areas continue to suffer population decline). The immigration reality is bringing people to us from everywhere, and these non-Anglos are often open to the Gospel of Christ. Our burgeoning international work and relations are bringing more and more domestic contacts with immigrants (e.g., from Sudan, Ethiopia, Madagascar, etc.). As New England District President Tim Yeadon noted recently, “We have a target-rich environment.” It behooves *every* congregation, *every* pastor, *every* church leader to seek ways to seriously evaluate context, quality, opportunities, strength of preaching, of education, outreach, etc. There are many ways to do this, including our own “re:Vitality” (see below in the CMO’s report) in the Office of National Mission. Question: Do we really believe what Jesus said? “No one comes to the Father but by me” (John 14:6)? And do we really believe that “faith comes by hearing” (Rom. 10:17)?

Hold Fast! (Marriage and Culture)

“Hold fast the confession,” the writer to the Hebrews tells us. Last year’s SCOTUS decision on same-sex marriage is parallel to *Roe v. Wade* some forty years earlier. A progressive court—making up meaning for texts of the constitution, which contained no such meaning or intent—made a consequential decision severely impacting the moral nature of the country. When *Roe* passed, the progressives believed it was all over. Hospitals and doctors would all simply have to perform abortions. But what happened? In fact, the fight had just begun. Because of the conscientious objection of Christians and others, legal battles, state by state (and with a few incremental victories in the US Congress), Christians won the right not to participate in the abortion machine. Forty years ago, *no one* would have thought a clear majority of Millennials would be pro-life. Technology is largely responsible for that (e.g., ultrasound and other advances in medical imaging). Many are predicting a similar trajectory for the terrible *Obergefell* decision. Make no mistake, the struggle is coming our way. And the potential for conflict and damage is tremendous, particularly in our Concordia University System. Thank God, we have faithful and wise leaders! Stand fast!

Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL)

The LCRL is beginning to function. It has been closely tied with our “Free to Be Faithful” effort (<http://www.lcms.org/socialissues/freetobefaitful>). The center is located in Washington, DC. Its mission is to hold forth in the public square on the issues of life, marriage, and religious freedom. It is partnering with the Alliance Defending Freedom and other religious or nonreligious entities that espouse biblical and reasonable convictions on these issues. It is a nonpartisan, independently registered nonprofit organization that will comment on public policy affecting the three key issues noted. It is designed to be self-sustaining. About \$1.5 million has been raised for this effort, and we will commence the search for a director soon. The Center will engage interested LCMS people, including the legal community and youth. Stay tuned.

The International Moment

We continue to be overwhelmed by the international opportunities. Make no mistake, the LCMS is the only biblically and confessionally faithful church body with the global capacity that we have. Here I refer you to the extensive report of Dr. Albert Collver below. Suffice it to say, more and more church bodies continue to seek us out as a partner who is faithful to the Scriptures and the catechism. **We could conceivably see dozens of churches, with millions of members, join our International Lutheran Council in the upcoming decade.** Recently, we were visited by representatives of an Anglican church in South Sudan. We were shocked when they told us that their leaders have been studying Luther’s Small Catechism. They had been studying our website and want to become Lutheran and join our worldwide fellowship. Dr. Collver just made a first visit to Sudan, and it went extremely well. The plan is coming together for more catechisms and instruction. This church body has 1 million members.

We Can No Longer Pit National Witness against International Witness

Folks, here’s how mission works. Local congregations and districts are primarily responsible for the Synod’s mission in their area. The national Synod does not dictate the when, where, who, or even how of this work. Even when the national office provides missionaries (e.g., our new city mission effort), those people are responsible to the local district. On the other hand, the national Synod has the primary responsibility for international mission. The Board for International Mission calls missionaries to international settings and provides the system of support for such missionaries. We now live in a “glocal” (“global” and “local”) world. When we are working with folks in South Sudan, we are connected with Sudanese people in the US. When we are connected to Ethiopian immigrants in the US, there are immediate connections in Ethiopia!

A Word about the Seminaries

Although the total seminary graduating class is up, it looks like we will still be short of filling some twenty calls. And we have large classes of pastors retiring for some years to come. Yet, with burgeoning international needs, with a growing non-Anglo population in the US, and with traditional students, the seminaries are stretched. We have some 30 students studying right now through the Global Seminary Initiative, which brings leaders and potential leaders of world Lutheranism to study with us. Many of our professors are, in addition to teaching domestically, taking up the gauntlet to teach all over the world as needed, in order to strengthen our partners in mission. God bless both Drs. Meyer and Rast and their faculties. I’m pleased that over the past six years, via the Global Seminary Initiative and other efforts, we have significantly increased the funding from the national Synod to the seminaries.

The Concordia University System

Following the 2013 Convention, we appointed a task force to look at issues of mission and Lutheran identity at our universities. We'll be sorting through the task force recommendations, but let me publicly acknowledge the presidents of the CUS schools. I've enjoyed getting to know them. Collectively they worked with Dr. Dean Wenthe and Dr. Gerhard Mundinger on ways to strengthen their work, mission, and connection to the church. Pat Ferry and Concordia University Wisconsin stepped in and have completely turned around Concordia University, Ann Arbor. What blessings! The whole church rejoices!

Wittenberg

Our Welcome Center in Wittenberg's Old Latin School is now functioning. We have only \$250,000 left to reach the funding goal, and it will be completely paid for. *With guest room rentals, the facility is actually already self-sustaining.* The seminaries and Concordia universities are beginning to schedule events. The international seminary meeting of all our partners will occur at the building this fall. The International Lutheran Council (ILC) is in the process of developing a strategic plan to increase its capacity to serve our partners worldwide and to reach more and more Lutheran churches to assist with education for outreach. We hope to have an ILC office or headquarters associated with our building in Wittenberg. *Thank you for the support! Praise God!*

International Missionaries Doubled

Last convention we resolved to double the number of career missionaries. We had hoped to reach that goal already last fall, but some unexpected attrition and other factors prevented it. We have a large class of new missionaries preparing for launch in the next few months, so we trust we can reach the goal. Thanks so much for the tremendous support for these men and women and their families. For more on this, see the extensive report of the Office of International Mission below.

Follow the Money

Six years ago, the LCMS headquarters had borrowed as much as \$15 million from funds designated for other purposes. **That was paid back as of about a year ago.** Our revenues have been under budget, but we have at the same time *not* overspent our revenues. If we don't have the funds, we don't spend the dollars. This is a challenge, particularly when the stock market and economy are underperforming. It can also be frustrating at times, just when so many mission opportunities are burgeoning. But alas, good nonprofit practice is the right way to go. And the Lord always, always blesses.

Convention Challenges

Licensed Lay Deacons

Please carefully read the Task Force Report on licensed lay deacons below! I have found that when people have not read the report, they often have inaccurate ideas or information about what the task force is proposing. The task force has done *thorough* work. They have visited the districts most invested in licensed lay deacons (LLDs). They have met with the Council of Presidents numerous times. It is the most thorough task force work I have seen done in the LCMS. The proposal is to offer SMP colloquy to LLDs currently serving as pastors. This will involve regional colloquy committees who will meet with each LLD and provide the appropriate route toward ordination. This may involve some study at the LLD institute a district uses or short-term courses at one of the seminaries. There will be passion about this on the convention floor. We must be patient with one another.

The 2013 Convention gave the President the authority to appoint a task force to work toward a resolution of the contention we've had

since 1989, when the Wichita Convention allowed for LLDs. The direction of the Wichita resolution was to grant district presidents the ability to license laymen to preach and administer the Sacrament in select, difficult, ethnic, or remote situations, where ministries would otherwise not be able to exist. Many were convinced (and I one of them) that the way the Synod resolved to address these challenging circumstances contradicted the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions. "How can they preach unless they are sent?" (Rom. 10:15). Also AC XIV, "No one should preach or teach without a regular call." A "regular call" as the CTCR and the report note, includes an examination of the candidate (is he apt to teach?), the call of the congregation, and ordination as confirmation of the call and recognition by the broader church that this man is a pastor.

There have been abuses of Wichita that continue and have gone far beyond what was intended. We have men preaching and administering the Sacraments within congregations where there is an ordained man and thus no emergency at all. We have men who were formerly on the roster as pastors who were removed for cause and who have been appointed LLDs. I recently spoke to a district president who inherited five LLDs, several of whom had been removed for Sixth Commandment issues. Granted, some of these are unusual cases, but they do demonstrate that our current system is in need of improvement.

There are truly a number of cases where small and mostly rural or inner-city churches would not be able to exist without LLDs. The LLDs I've met are, as a group, marvelous Christians. The task force proposals provide a way for us to resolve a difficult issue *and* serve the genuine need, while holding to the Bible and our Lutheran Confessions.

Note Bene!

- *Both seminary faculties* have passed resolutions in *support* of the task force recommendations.
- The CTCR unanimously resolved to support the task force recommendations.
- This proposal would affect about 225 men who are currently serving as pastors. It would not affect those LLDs (including women) who are not carrying out pastoral functions.
- No one is calling into question the efficacy of the work of preaching and administering the Sacraments of the men who have served since Wichita in 1989. In fact, we thank God for their service.
- This does not shut down LLD training efforts. We *need* laypeople (men and women) trained to assist with appropriate work of all kinds in the church.
- There is concern that ending the LLDs' functioning as pastors will mean that a district president's hands will be tied regarding truly difficult situations. I have recommended that the COP form a committee that would take to the full council for approval recommendations for cases that are truly exceptional. This would also prevent abuses.

Again, *please read the Task Force Report!* A convention resolution based upon the report will be forthcoming.

Why Pastor Esget?

Unfortunately, last year, Dr. Kuhn needed to resign his position, due to health reasons, as East-Southeast Region Vice-President on the Synod's Praesidium. In keeping with the Bylaws, congregations of the East-Southeast Region nominated five men for this position in 2013. Dr. Kuhn was, of course, among those five. Pastor Esget will certainly be among the top five nominees for 2016. In the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws, the vice-presidents are to assist the President of the Synod in his duties as needed. The Bylaws do not emphasize the representative nature of vice-presidents relative to their region. The district presidents of a region are representative, though their primary function is to serve as an extension of the office of Synod President

(though not simply at his direction) for ecclesiastical supervision in their respective districts.

I found in Pastor Esget several very attractive features: (1) His congregation is in the very top 1 to 3 percentage points of performance (Baptisms, adult confirmations, school growth, etc.) in the entire East-Southeast Region (Maine to Alabama). (2) His congregation faithfully practices the Synod's doctrinal practice of closed Communion. In 2013, the Synod in convention voted at 77 percent that I, as Synod President, should see to it that this doctrinal practice is carried out and that I should encourage district presidents to work with their congregations where needed. I need regional vice-presidents to assist me in this effort. (3) Pastor Esget serves a congregation in the area of Washington, DC, and many of his members serve in government and related entities. This is helpful in our current circumstances with respect to religious freedom. (4) Pastor Esget is a longtime and committed advocate for pro-life causes, serving on the Synod's pro-life task force. (5) Pastor Esget is a superb teacher and a genuinely nice and gentle human being.

A Word of Public Thanks for the Other Vice-Presidents

First Vice-President Herb Mueller is a man in whom there is no guile. I've never had the pleasure of working with a person who is more full of faith, hope, and love, nor with a harder worker.

Second Vice-President John Wohlrabe is a retired Navy chaplain with a ThD from Concordia Seminary and a plethora of faithful pastoral experience in the mission of Christ (mostly aboard Navy vessels!).

Third Vice-President Daniel Preus brings a soft-spoken kindness and fidelity, marked more often than not with patience.

Fourth Vice-President Scott Murray brings a calm determination and wise counsel, from a pastor who serves another of the very top-performing congregations in the entire Synod.

Fifth Vice-President Nabil Nour was born in Nazareth where Jesus lived. He's a preacher and a pastor with a zeal to share the Gospel. He is very wise, and he's helping me with Hebrew, which he speaks fluently!

Confederation?

For a very long time (60 years at least), there have been competing views of the nature of our synodical union. I have been observing these issues for a long time. After visiting nearly all the districts this past triennium, and being at this job for some six years, I'm convinced that we have a real challenge. When theological differences began to grow and really take hold in the Synod (really from the 1940s), some districts over time found it advantageous to keep their distance from "St. Louis" and the more conservative Midwest. Because of the nature of the calling process, various districts over time took on a more moderate character and others a more conservative character on issues like communion practice, worship, etc. Today, we have districts that may not have had a graduate from one of our two seminaries for as long as a decade, highly preferring one seminary over the other.

We have what I would characterize as a generational tendency on the Council of Presidents (though it's not absolute). The more senior men view the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions more descriptively. For example, when the Lutheran Confessions state that "no one should preach or teach without a regular call" (AC XIV), this statement is viewed as being "descriptive" of a faithful practice within a sixteenth-century context, but not necessarily for today. The younger men tend, on the other hand, to view the confessions more "prescriptively." Thus when the Confessions say some five times that no one is to be communed who has not been "instructed, examined, and absolved," (e.g., through confirmation instruction), this is viewed as being a prescribed biblical practice.

I believe the issue of licensed lay deacons brings all of these issues to a head, and that's why some districts are very concerned. It's about mission, yes, but also about autonomy. Let me state clearly that *all* of our district presidents are men of integrity and character, committed to the Scriptures, Confessions, and the church's mission. The Koinonia Project has been very helpful for the Council of Presidents, and as we move further from 1974, things will continue to improve.

Simply put, the Synod was not designed to be a confederation of districts. The Synod is a church body unified in doctrine and practice. We have extensive freedom in practice as Christians. "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5:10). Yet, we voluntarily sacrifice a bit of that freedom for the sake of our brothers and sisters. "Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). And we also realize that some practice may not be my particular preference but is still within the realm of acceptability. God help us.

Can We Visit about Visitation?

We have acted on the very significant visitation resolution from the 2013 convention. Between Vice-President Mueller and me, we have visited nearly all of the districts in the last three years. We've spent time with the district presidents and their wives. We've sat in on district board of directors meetings. We've met circuit visitors and many more. Herb and I split the districts and took the regional vice-president to each visit with us.

It has been grueling to get all this done, but it's been worth it. Wow, do I know the Synod so much better! Our districts are run well. **We have great laypeople doing great work.** I'm thrilled with all the efforts of so many districts to care for and improve the well-being of church workers. The concern for mission has been inspiring. The efforts at outreach to non-Anglo populations are amazing. The hospitality has been stellar everywhere. And above all, these visits allowed us to hear the frontline concerns of our folks, to share a wealth of information with one another about Synod and district, to hold one another accountable to the mission, and to "build one another up" in the name of Jesus. Thanks be to God! I'm thrilled about all the times I've heard about district presidents, district vice-presidents, circuit visitors, pastors, and people visiting church workers, congregations, communities, prospects, etc. Dr. Robert Preus taught us long ago at the seminary: "If your people see you in the pulpit and in their living rooms, you'll never have any problems." It's a truism, but it's true. Visitation is the way of Jesus. It's the way of St. Paul. It's the way of the church and of every pastor. "Let's go!" (Mark 1:38).

Chairman Michael Kumm and Synod's Board of Directors

In 2010, I came into office with an amazing Synod Board of Directors. I cannot be prouder of the service they have rendered and continue to render to the church. From the beginning—with the support of Treasurer Jerry Wulf—we resolved to eliminate the internal indebtedness to funds designated for other purposes. We also resolved that the BOD would not be involved in political infighting. Over the years, we have dealt with some horrendously challenging issues (e.g., Concordia University, Ann Arbor). The Lord has blessed, and the Lord continues to bless!

Special Thanks to Village Lutheran Church

Almost six years ago I received a call (nonsalaried) to serve as an assistant pastor at Village Lutheran in Ladue, Missouri. This has been a tremendous blessing to me and my family. It has allowed me, in spite of the travel schedule, to stay more closely connected to the local parish. And working for Pastor Kevin Golden keeps me humble!

A Personal Note

I can hardly believe that I've been at this work nearly five and a half years. These years have been a great sacrifice, particularly for my dear wife and sons. I recall one day when my older son, as a senior in high school several years ago, called me on the phone. "Dad, can you give me a ride home from school today?" I replied, "I'd sure love to, Matthew, but I'm in Berlin right now." He responded, "What? You're not home?" My dear wife has carried on her vocation with such grace, fortitude, and faith that our boys have managed to make it well into the university years still loving Jesus, their church, and ... their parents.

This year past has been the most challenging of our lives. On the last day of July 2015, a fire destroyed much of our home. As of February 2016, we are not yet back into our house, but the date is approaching. It's been beautifully rebuilt. The trauma of losing so much was offset by the joy of realizing what finally matters in life: Jesus, my dear wife and boys, and church, family, and friends. The month of August was spent sorting through possessions, with my wife and two sons at my side, crying, laughing, and pitching. It was the greatest thing that has ever happened to us (next to Christ and our Baptisms). "God works all things for good." The outpouring of prayer for us was amazing, and we are blessed.

Blessings far outweigh the crosses. As folks have remarked on the gray coming over my head, I've often responded, "Synod presidents age in dog years." The visitation and convention schedule the past year or two has been very challenging. It has been my joy, however, to encounter a church largely at peace. The Synod, to be sure, is far from perfect. When I've been the source of or contributor to controversy, I have sought to recognize my own sin and shortcomings, confess them, and work for resolution.

Long ago, as a young parish pastor, I began to learn that, no matter how hard you try, you simply cannot please everyone. The Synod is just a very large congregation, with personalities, flaws, weaknesses, strengths, recusants, cheerleaders, conflicts, and accomplishments. Every morning, I wake up with the deepest desire to be faithful. In the office, I say my prayers at a kneeler and invariably read the Psalms. These ancient prayers confess the range of my emotions, challenges, and blessings on any given day. I tend to write notes about issues that need prayer. Over the past two terms, I have witnessed remarkable blessings and answers to prayer.

There is much more to tell you about. The 2017 anniversary of the Reformation will be before us this summer, and we'll make some important decisions about how to celebrate it. For now, I'll spare you any more, knowing full well there is a mountain of information to follow this report. In Part Two, I'll take up some other significant issues for this summer.

Finally, I'd like to thank my staff for such stellar work. They are amazing.

Looking forward to a *great* convention!

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13)

Pastor Matthew C. Harrison

R1.1

A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century

In fulfillment of 2013 Res. 1-03A and adopted by the Board for International Mission on Feb. 24, 2014.

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

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

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

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

4. Christ, the source and model for the life of faith. Faith lays hold of Christ, and from Him it is enlivened and given its impulse and model for *Witness (martyria)*, *Mercy (diakonia)*, *Life Together (koinonia)*. Jesus spends Himself completely (Mark 1:38) to bear witness

as the Son of God sent for the salvation of the world (John 3:16). Jesus has compassion on the needy within and outside the community of faith (Mark 7:28). Jesus establishes a community of believers who are “brothers and sisters” (Acts 2; Mark 3:31ff.), who are “not to lord it over each other” (Matt. 20:25) but to live together in forgiveness (Matthew 18), love (John 15), and mutual service (John 15:12; Mark 10:45; Philemon 2). “Oh, faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good” (FC SD V 10). While the Church’s work of extending of Christ’s *Witness* (*martyria*), *Mercy* (*diakonia*), *Life Together* (*koinonia*) in community will always be but a weak reflection of His own, where there is no *Witness*, *Mercy*, *Life Together* in forgiveness and love, there is no Church, no faith in Christ. To paraphrase Luther, Christ is both *sacramentum* and *exemplum*, both sacrament (gift) and model for the Christian.

5. The saving Word of God. God’s means of bringing salvation in Christ is the Word of God proclaimed: “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:8–9). “That we may obtain this faith,” our confession says, “the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted” (AC V).² Thus the Church, the assembly of all believers in Christ, is found *where* the Word of God is found, where “the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel” (AC VII).³ The Word of God—read, spoken, proclaimed—will not return to God empty but will accomplish His purpose (Is. 55:10–11) and will bring people to faith in Christ “where and when it pleases God in those who hear the gospel” (AC V).⁴ That is why the Church is not recognized by individual faith or works, which may be invented or contrived, but by these external marks, “the pure teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the gospel of Christ” (Ap VII and VIII).⁵ Therefore, where the Word of God is found; where Holy Absolution is proclaimed (the specific announcement of the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ); where Holy Baptism is done in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; where Christ’s true body and blood are given by His Word of promise, there you will find the Church, the assembly of believers in Christ, and there you will find Christ Himself. Moreover, where Christ’s Church is located in the Word and Sacraments, there you will find *Witness* (*martyria*), *Mercy* (*diakonia*), *Life Together* (*koinonia*) (Gal. 2:8–9).

6. Witness is the sacred and fundamental task of the Church. Bearing witness to the saving Good News of God for us in Jesus is the fundamental task of the Church (Matt. 28:19). This leads to the making of disciples. The apostolic witness is connected to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The preaching of the Gospel consistently proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah promised by the Old Testament Scriptures, preached the damning Law in full force (“You killed the author of life” [Acts 3:15]), and preached forgiveness through repentance, faith, and Holy Baptism. This apostolic message is to predominate proclamation by called preachers within the community of believers, the proclamation of evangelists to those outside the Church, and the witness of every Christian in the context of his or her vocations in life. It is the sacred task of preachers to know the Scriptures ever more profoundly and constantly to seek to improve the craft of preaching that the Gospel may be preached in its biblical fullness and with clarity to its hearers. It is the sacred task of preachers to equip the saints to bear witness to Jesus to their friends, family, and others who are placed before them in their daily vocations. The Word of God is equally effective for salvation, whether proclaimed by Christ, the angels, called preachers, or shared by common Christians among one another or with those who do not yet

know Christ’s forgiveness (Is. 55:11). In order to carry on Christ’s witness into the world, the Church is entrusted with training, teaching, and making pastors through theological education. This witness will accompany the Church’s corporate work of mercy (the mercy is Christ’s) and will dominate the Church’s life together. “Where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit who creates, calls, and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one comes to Christ the Lord” (LC II 45).

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

Here we see that it is the people of the New Testament, or the Holy Christian Church, that God has prepared or established, to show forth His praise in all the world. That means that the church is to make known the great works of God for the salvation of men, or that which is the same thing, to preach the Gospel to every creature. Even Isaiah gives this testimony, having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit: The true mission society that has been instituted by God is nothing else than *the Christian church itself*, that is the totality of all those who from the heart believe in Jesus Christ.⁶

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

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

9. Life Together as bestowed and lived. Our Life Together in Christ’s Church is not acquired by human decision or merit; it is a gift. Just as one does not elect one’s own family, so we are brought into Christ’s holy people by the action of the triune God. “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). The Lord has called, gathered, enlightened, and sanctified us through the Gospel to live together as

His church. Life in this community is a gift that entails responsibility. We see this in Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians to bear with one another in love, "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), even as he is quick to add that we were called into the one Body of Christ and faith in a singular Lord. We cannot create the unity of the Body of Christ; that is given. But we are to be on guard against teachings and practices that would tempt us away from the one Lord, the one faith, and the one Baptism that keep us in union with the one God and Father of us all.

10. *Witness, Mercy, Life Together* in the apostolic Church.

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

"Bearing witness," says Luther, "is nothing but God's Word spoken by angels or men, and it calls for faith."⁷ In Acts 1:8, the risen Lord says of His apostles that they will be His witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and beyond those borders to the end of the earth. It is the apostles who with their own eyes have seen the Lord, touched Him with their own hands, and heard His voice with their ears (see 1 John 1:1–4) who are designated witnesses. We are witnesses only in the derived sense that our words echo the reliable testimony of the apostles. To bear witness is to speak not of ourselves but of another—Christ Jesus. The apostolic Church is sent to repeat the witness of the apostles that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is the only Lord who saves.

"You notice," said Luther, "that concern for the poor is the other work of the apostles."⁸ St. Paul exhorts the church to care for the poor. In the third century, Tertullian wrote how the pagans would say of the Christians, "See how they love one another."⁹ The way that the Church cares for the needs of those within the Church is a witness to the world. Yet the mercy of God does not stay within the Church but goes out from the household of faith into the entire world.

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

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

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

12. The Church today as a community of *Witness, Mercy, Life Together*.

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

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

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

13. Word of God. The triune God is a speaking God. By His spoken Word, the Father brought creation into existence (Gen. 1:1–2; Ps. 33:6; John 1:1–3). Christ who is the eternal Logos speaks His words, which are "spirit and life" (John 6:63). The Word of Christ's death and resurrection—the message of God's reconciliation of sinners to Himself—is preached. It is this preaching that creates faith since "faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). The Holy Spirit breathed out by Jesus to His apostles on Easter evening (see John 20:22) inspired them to put His Word into writing "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). It is through the prophetic and apostolic witness to Christ delivered to us in the Holy Scriptures—the Spirit-inspired and inerrant Word of God—that we have access to Jesus and life with Him (see 2 Tim. 3:15 and 2 Pet. 1:16–21). The Holy Scriptures are to be interpreted in

light of their being given by the triune God. “The exegesis of the Holy Scriptures cannot contradict their inspiration.”¹³ Both interpreter and context stand under the Holy Scriptures and are, in fact, interpreted by the divine Word. The internal clarity of Scripture is mediated through the external clarity of its own words. Far from being an imposition on the Bible, the right distinction of the Law from the Gospel is nothing other than the distinction between “letter” and “Spirit” (see 2 Cor. 3:1–18). Without this distinction, the Holy Scriptures remain a dark book (see Ap IV 5–6; FC V 1–27).

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

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

14. Baptism. Baptism is far more than a rite of initiation. While it is a line of demarcation between unbelief and faith and hence not optional for mission, it is more than an entry point into the Christian life. Dr. C. F. W. Walther wrote, “Let us never forget that through Holy Baptism we have all joined the mission society which God Himself has established.”¹⁴ Baptism is best thought of as present tense, hence, “I am baptized” and not “I was baptized.” Luther notes, “I am baptized, and through my baptism God, who cannot lie, has bound himself in a covenant with me.”¹⁵ Baptism is the triune God’s gift whereby He demonstrates His mercy by bestowing on us a new birth (see John 3:3–6; 1 Pet. 1:3–5; Titus 3:4–7). Baptized into His own name (Matt. 28:18–20), we have God’s own pledge and witness that we belong to Him through the forgiveness of sins (see Acts 2:38–39) and are heirs according to the promise (Rom. 6:1–11; Gal. 3:26–29; Col. 2:12–14). Therefore, Baptism will not be withheld from infants or from new converts to the faith. Since it is by Baptism that we are joined to the body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12:12–13), this Sacrament is foundational for our life together.

15. Lord’s Supper. Hermann Sasse described the Sacrament of the Altar as “the church’s heartbeat.”¹⁶ In this Sacrament, Christ gives His body and blood under bread and wine for us Christians to eat and to drink. It is His testament in which He bestows the fruits of His saving sacrifice on the cross: His body given into death and His blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Luther underscores the forgiveness of sins in the Small Catechism as he engages in a threefold repetition of the words “given for you” and “shed for the forgiveness of sins.” These words show us that the Sacrament of the Altar is the testament of God’s sure mercy for sinners. When we come to eat and drink Christ’s body and blood, we come as beggars to the feast of heaven. In this Sacrament, we are not accessing Christ by liturgical mimesis;¹⁷ rather, we are proclaiming the Lord’s death until He comes (see 1 Cor. 11:26). Eating and drinking in the Lord’s Supper does not create life together (*koinonia*) but confess and express this unity we have in the proclamation of Christ’s death. Life together (*koinonia*) in confessing Him is always Christ’s work and Christ’s gift by His Word. Hence the practice of closed Communion is a necessary corollary of the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper.¹⁸ Bringing contradiction in

teaching or life in the Holy Communion fails to give witness to Christ and what He gives us in and with His body and blood.

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

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

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

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

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

17. Office and offices. There is one office that Christ has instituted for the proclamation of His Word and the giving out of His Sacraments. This is the Office of the Holy Ministry (see John 20:21–23; AC V XIV, XXVII). Through the call of the Church, the Lord places qualified men into this office (see 1 Cor. 14:33–38; 1 Tim. 2:8–14). The men who serve in this office are to be properly trained and capable (see 1 Tim. 3:1–7; 2 Tim. 2:1–7; 4:1–5; Titus 1:5–9) of the task of being stewards of the mysteries of God (see 1 Cor. 4:1–2). The Church may not be without this office for it is to this office that Christ has entrusted the preaching of His Word and the administration of His Sacraments. No one puts himself into this office nor does the Church have the right to refashion the office into something other than what

the Lord has instituted or to put men into the office without being called and ordained (see AC XIV). The Church does live in freedom to create offices that assist those who are placed in the one divinely mandated office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. These helping offices (auxiliary offices) would include deacons, deaconesses, evangelists, schoolteachers, catechists, cantors, parish nurses, workers of mercy, and the like. These are valuable offices of service to the Body of Christ and the world, but they are not to be confused with the Office of the Holy Ministry itself. The Office of the Holy Ministry might be said to be the office of faith as Christ instituted it so that faith might be created in the hearts of those who hear the preaching of Christ crucified. Helping, or auxiliary, offices are the offices of love for through these callings the love of Christ is extolled in word and deed as His mercy is extended to those in need.

Those whom Christ through His Church has placed in the Office of the Holy Ministry do not lord it over the priesthood of the baptized, but they stand among the baptized, as one of them, holding an office of service, seeking only to give out the Lord's gifts as He intended (1 Cor. 4:1–2).

18. Worship: koinonia, freedom, catholicity, and the limits of love. Questions of liturgical diversity and uniformity need to be set within the context of the distinction between faith and love. Faith is freed by the Gospel from all works of self-justification, but faith is not freed from the Gospel or the means that Christ has instituted to bestow the Gospel (the pure preaching of this Good News and the right administration of the Sacraments according to the divine Word; see AC VII). Preaching and Sacraments require form, and this form is catholic rather than sectarian or self-invented. Lutherans gratefully inherited the Western liturgical tradition filtered through the sieve of justification by faith alone and honor it as our heritage (AC XXIV). Lutherans make a distinction between what Christ has mandated and what His Word prohibits. In between the two are “adiaphora” or “middle things,” which are neither commanded nor forbidden by God. The middle category of adiaphora does not mean that these matters are unimportant or indifferent; they are to be evaluated by how they confess the truth of the Gospel and Sacraments. In times when a clear confession is called for, the Formula of Concord reminds us, matters of adiaphora may cease to be adiaphora (see FC SD X). Ludwig Adolph Petri notes that mission “must abstain from establishing confessions, accepting new customs in the divine service, uniting separated confessions, and the like. As soon as mission begins to do something like that, it is manifestly in the wrong, for none of those tasks is charged or relegated to mission.”¹⁹ This is to say that matters of liturgical practice are not best left to the individual but should reflect our confessional consensus so that both the freedom of faith and the love for brothers and sisters is maintained. Love is always given to patience and deference to the weakness of the fellow believer (see Romans 14), but it may never be used as an excuse to compromise the truth of our confession. Liturgical diversity within the larger catholic context will be guided by the need to maintain unity in both faith and love (see FC SD X 9).

19. Visitation. Sometime after his first missionary journey, “Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are’” (Acts 15:36). So the Church today—following also the example of the apostles, Luther, Melancthon, and others—engages in evangelical visitation, appointing people to the task so that we encourage and assist one another in the confession of Christ before the world. In our Synod, we come alongside one another to advise one another from the Word of God. The focus of our visitation of one another is faithfulness both to the mission of Christ through the Church to the world and to our clear confession of Christ's saving work. Visitors are enjoined to come to the pastors and congregations and mission

stations as a brotherly adviser, reminding them of the joy of serving in the mission and ministry of the Church. Visitation is a continuing task in the Church, carried out through all segments of the Church's life together. When we visit our partners around the world, it must also be in the same Christ-centered spirit as the Lord's apostle who, before his visitation with them, writes to the Romans, “I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine” (Rom. 1:11–12).

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

Lutherans are concerned to keep the teaching of the two kingdoms straight and clear for the sake of the Gospel, which alone gives forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. Luther fumed that the devil is incessantly seeking to “brew and cook” the two kingdoms together.²⁰ Satan would like nothing better than to dupe folks into believing that salvation comes through secular government or conversely that the Church is the institution to establish civil righteousness in the world. Either confusion displaces Christ and leaves sinners in despair.

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

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

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

favor but on account of His prior gift, salvation in Christ Jesus. In 2 Corinthians, stewardship is connected with assisting those in need, in showing mercy.

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

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

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

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

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

true: "All that we think and do in the church has to be cleansed by the theology of the cross if we are to escape the perils of a theology of glory."²¹ The theology of the cross will forever be a litmus test of the genuineness of *Witness, Mercy, Life Together* in our midst.

Notes

1. *Witness, Mercy, Life Together* is an attempt to describe what the Church always has done—proclaim the Gospel, care for people's bodily needs, and have fellowship and community together as the Church. Whatever titles are given to these activities or terms used to describe them, these basic activities have been a part of the Church since the beginning. See Albert B. Collver's *Witness, Mercy, Life Together: Bible Study* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House), 2011. In *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), Detlev Schultz describes both the Trinitarian nature of mission as well as the activities of the Church and Christians that could be described in terms of *Witness, Mercy, Life Together*. Schultz uses the terms "proclamation, confession, and witness," the church's *diakonia*, "a new community ... an ecclesial reality for mission."
2. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds. *Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 41.
3. *Ibid.*, 42.
4. *Ibid.*, 41.
5. *Ibid.*, 174. (Compare with Ignatius, "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans": "Where Christ Jesus is, there is the catholic church," 8).
6. C. F. W. Walther. "The Mission Society Established by God," in *The Word of His Grace* (Lake Mills: Graphic Publishing Co., 1978), 20.
7. Martin Luther. "Lectures on Zechariah" (1527) in *Luther's Works*, vol. 20, ed., Walther Miller, trans. Hilton Oswald (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), 213.
8. Martin Luther. *Luther's Works*, vol. 20: *Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 5–6; 1519, Chapters 1–6*, eds. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton Oswald, Helmut Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 2:10.
9. Tertullian. Vol 3: *Apology 39.6 Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishing, 1996), 46.
10. Martin Luther. *Luther's Works*, vol. 26: *Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1–4*, eds. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton Oswald, Helmut Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), Ga 2:9.
11. Werner Elert. *Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 386.
12. Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf. "The Lutheran Church Plants Lutheran Missions," trans. Matthew C. Harrison and Rachel Mumme. Unpublished, 2013.
13. Oswald Bayer. "Theology as Askesis," in *Gudstankens aktualitet*, trans. E. M. Wiberg Pedersen, et al. (Copenhagen: Forlaget ANIS, 2010), 49.
14. Walther, 24.
15. Martin Luther. *Luther's Works*, vol. 35: *Word and Sacrament I*, eds. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton Oswald, Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 36.
16. Hermann Sasse. *We Confess the Sacraments*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), 151.
17. Mimesis means "imitation, mimicry."
18. The Missouri Synod has used different nomenclature to express the idea of closed Communion at various times in her history. Different terms have been used to describe the same doctrine and practice. The terms "closed Communion," "close Communion," and "close(d) Communion" are equivalent terms. Art. VI of the Missouri Synod's Constitution states as a condition of membership in the Synod, "Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description." Art. VI 2 (b) provides additional clarification by defining unionism and syncretism as "Taking part in the

services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession.” The practice of closed Communion then does not include receiving Communion at churches that hold heterodox positions. The Missouri Synod has adopted Dr. C. F. W. Walther’s *Church and the Office of the Ministry* as its official position in 2001 (Res. 7-17A). In Thesis VIII of Walther’s *Church and the Office of the Ministry*, Walther writes, “Here the saying of Augustine holds: ‘Believe and you have eaten.’ As I said before: To receive the Sacrament is a mark of confession and doctrine. Therefore, whoever does not regard as true the doctrine of the church in which he intends to attend the Sacrament cannot partake of the Sacrament in that church with a clear conscience.” (Download Walther’s Thesis VIII at <http://goo.gl/gKqIQ>.) Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 76. “By ‘closed Communion’ we mean the restricting of participation to full members of the congregation.” Participation in Holy Communion is directly connected to church fellowship.

19. Ludwig Adolph Petri. *Mission and the Church: A letter to a friend (Die Mission und die Kirche: Schreiben an einen Freund)*, trans. David Buchs (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2012).

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

21. Hermann Sasse. *We Confess Jesus Christ*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 52.

R1.2

Chief Mission Officer

Introduction

The Chief Mission Officer (CMO) is responsible to the President of the Synod for the mission, ministry, and programmatic and coordinative functions which are implemented according to the policies adopted by the Board for National Mission and the Board for International Mission, by providing staff and other resources in support thereof. LCMS Bylaw 3.4.3 also specifies that he serves as the President’s liaison to synodwide corporate entities and commissions; works closely with the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Administrative Officer in carrying out the programmatic, administrative, and financial functions of the national Synod; supervises the work of the Office of National Mission (ONM), the Office of International Mission (OIM), the fund-raising activity of the national office through the work of our Mission Advancement (MA) unit, the Synod’s communications, public relations, news, and information through the work of our communications (COMM) unit; and provides leadership, coordination, and oversight of pre-seminary/seminary education and post-seminary continuing education, and advocacy for pastoral education and health through the work of our Office of Pastoral Education (PE).

These CMO duties are carried out in crucial support of districts and congregations, organizations and entities, church workers and laypersons around the globe—all striving under the *freedom* of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—for the *sake* of the Gospel—to engage the Synod’s emphases of Witness, Mercy, Life Together. We do so in support of the Synod’s common mission, adopted in our 1995 convention:

In grateful response to God’s grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of The Lutheran Church—

Missouri Synod is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities, and world.

Dear 2016 convention floor committees and delegates, *upon this Rock, we repent, confess, and rejoice* as the program areas of our Synod’s national office prayerfully foster working relationships—in service to the Gospel—that embody worthy and beneficial characteristics of Christian discipleship: for example, faithfulness to the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions, love, compassion, humility, sustainability, stability, mutual awareness, trust, transparency, quality, and outstanding stewardship of the resources (human and other) so generously provided by our merciful God. We intentionally develop and implement robust plans that closely conform to the six strategic mission priorities adopted by the Synod in convention, 2013 Res. 3-06A:

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

Changes in CMO’s Office over the Past Triennium 2013–16

In the long and blessed history of the LCMS, the Chief Mission Officer position is a relative latecomer, having only been created in 2010 as a result of the convention-mandated organizational restructuring of the Synod. The initial appointee called to serve the Synod as CMO, Rev. Gregory K. Williamson, departed the office in April 2014. Rev. J. Bart Day subsequently served as Interim CMO (concurrently, I might add, while faithfully and capably fulfilling his ongoing responsibilities as ONM Executive Director!) until I accepted the Synod’s call and was installed May 2015 to begin my service as the Synod’s current CMO. What a blessing for me personally, to serve the body of Christ and my fellow brothers and sisters in the faith in such a delightful and challenging role. I am humbled at the magnificent prospects before us together: to faithfully proclaim the Gospel, advance the kingdom of God, and introduce people to Jesus so that they can continue to receive His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Despite what occasionally appears to be the day-to-day “business trappings” of the office, I prayerfully intend, under the grace of God, to do my utmost in service to the LCMS, with the compassion and heart of a former parish pastor who is genuinely concerned for the care of the souls of those I’m privileged to meet and work with on a daily basis. Saturated in the Scriptures, we poor miserable sinners, convicted by the Law of our own transgressions, wounded and suffering the persecution and rejection of a fallen world, are constantly being given over to healing and life in the Gospel. And, quite simply, that is where I’m “coming from” in my role as your servant:

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:1–5)

Since beginning my duties in St. Louis, I have diligently sought to execute an effective on-boarding plan, a structured series of activities that included intentional introductions to and increased familiarization with LCMS structure (boards, committees, leadership, agencies, entities, policies, and procedures); nonprofit finance, accounting, and development; and introductory one-on-one meetings with a

wide variety of LCMS-related personnel. In these thoroughly enjoyable (and countless, it seems) interviews, strong commitments were consistently expressed to various aspects of the Synod's six mission priorities (see above). The primary responses to my question, "What are the most important things about the LCMS that we should be sure to preserve?" have been the following, in summary:

- Our Lutheran identity and unwavering stand on the Scriptures and Confessions
- Our mission to increase the proclamation of the Gospel and the expanse of God's kingdom

The primary responses to my question, "What are the top things we need to change?" have been the following, in summary:

- Increased communication, transparency, and trust between individuals, program areas, agencies, and entities within the LCMS structure—and an accompanying consensus and awareness of what each member of the body is doing for the sake of a harmonious, unified team effort toward accomplishing our goals
- Fewer significant organizational changes—inasmuch as this is feasible in a highly dynamic mission context. Where stability can be emphasized, it would help to remedy the uncertainties and discontinuities that inevitably arise, especially with the arrival of a new CMO and the recent substantial increases in the number of missionaries working in foreign mission fields
- Improved stewardship of all resources—by carefully managing policies, procedures, and processes; addressing conflict; and uncovering and eliminating inefficiencies and wasteful or contradictory duplication of efforts

I intend to continue advocacy and improvement of outstanding leadership, well-coordinated interaction between and within our program areas and every constituent/stakeholder of the Synod around the globe, and the effective implementation of the policies established by the Boards for National and International Mission. The unit executives and teams under my supervision are a constant source of awe and thanksgiving for the gifts and talents provided in and through them by God. All are currently and intensively planning for FY17 budget preparation and, in addition to their "typical" job responsibilities, are providing responsive work support to various demands in the run-up to this 2016 convention.

Accomplishments over the Past Triennium 2013–16

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

The report below, in Executive Summaries (by program area) and Detailed Reports and Commentary (by program area/ministry), summarizes our teams' key accomplishments over the past triennium.

With respect to actions mandated under the Synod's 2013 convention resolutions (pertinent references to these resolutions are provided throughout the report below), please also see the comprehensive summary of work performed by program areas reporting to the CMO in the most recent version of the 2013 Convention Resolution Update Report (published September 2015) at www.lcms.org/convention.

Among other current projects and priorities, several additional items of note have captured my attention and efforts in my first year of service as CMO:

- *Mercy Funding.* There is a consensus among the Office of the President, ONM, OIM MA, and COMM that a sharpened focus on funding the Synod's mercy efforts will serve to better address significant opportunities before us. MA and COMM are now working (in concert with the mission offices) to develop and implement a more well-coordinated, comprehensive, and sustained mercy funding strategy. For instance, this includes a resurrection of LCMS World Relief and Human Care branding, supportive changes to the LCMS website, and the use of other coordinated MA and COMM vehicles to facilitate

the connection of donors with program and ministry opportunities, and to offer corresponding services to and care of donors. The intended result is an increased mercy impact on people's lives.

- *Student Debt Task Force.* Following detailed studies sponsored by the St. Louis and Fort Wayne seminaries, this task force—including representatives from the seminaries and various synodwide corporate entities and agencies—convened for the first time in September 2016 under the leadership of the CMO to address the burgeoning problem of graduating seminarian (and other Synod church worker) educational debt. After reviewing efforts to date, the task force brainstormed needs for additional information and preliminary avenues for possible beneficial activity. Discussions with Concordia Plan Services, LCEF, and other entities and organizations have taken place in an effort to better define the exact problem that the task force is attempting to attack, as well as to identify potential key performance measures of progress against the task force's goal. The task force will convene again prior to the Synod's 2016 convention to review progress on "homework" and set action items, with the goal of establishing measurable progress toward solutions. This important work, responding in part to 2013 convention Res. 6-01A, will certainly continue into the next triennium.
- *PE Executive Director.* We are pursuing a plan to fill the current vacancy in the unit's Executive Director position, including participation of and input from the seminary presidents. In conjunction with the Synod's human resources department, a questionnaire was developed and sent to the seminary presidents for their feedback on expectations, anticipated job duties, and candidate qualifications and desired skills. Having received the seminary presidents' valuable insights, a search for qualified candidates is underway.
- *LCMS International Schools.* Much "informal" background study has been done in order to better understand the history, structure, mission, and ministry of the Synod's international schools (Hong Kong, Shanghai, Hanoi). The CMO and OIM Executive Director—both relatively new to their respective roles—will personally visit these "gems" of our Asia mission field prior to the Synod's 2016 convention for ongoing introductory meetings. Our common purpose is to lay the foundation for excellent future working relationships, coordination, and collaboration (all under existing protocols specified in the schools' Articles of Association and Operations Agreements), explore new mission opportunities, and provide strong advocacy for the schools here in the US (e.g., through the recruitment and sending of well-qualified faculty and administrative professionals).
- *Specific Ministry Pastor Program.* Per 2013 convention Res. 5-03E and 5-04B, "To Provide Procedure for Establishing Policies Governing Specific Ministry Pastor Program" and "To Continue and Strengthen Specific Ministry Pastor Program," discussions to address issues in the 2013 SMP program convention report have continued with designated representatives from both seminaries and appropriate input has been provided to the task force appointed under 2013 convention Res. 5-14A, "To Conduct Study of Alternate Routes to the Pastoral Ministry." The leadership, coordination, oversight, and continuous improvement work of the standing SMP Committee established under 2013 Res. 5-03E will continue into the 2016–19 triennium.

Significant CMO Objectives over the Coming Triennium 2016–19

Dear 2016 convention floor committee and delegates, the following list of CMO objectives is meant to provide you with additional background information and guidance as you deliberate and decide on the important matters before you. This is "what's on my mind," in wider perspective. For more specific objectives relating to our program areas, see the report that follows, in both the Executive Summaries and the Detailed Reports and Commentary.

These intentionally broad objectives, offered in service to and in support of the mission and ministry of the Synod, have emerged as the result of numerous observations, conversations, and planning efforts in my months on the job to date. I am strongly convinced that any

and all convention resolutions that are supportive of or well-coordinated with these goals will serve our Synod well:

- **Integrate a thorough analysis of the Synod's worldwide mission contexts; trends within the realms of church, state, and household; and our Synod's emphases, mission priorities, and goals into future projected planning scenarios and a comprehensive, vivid, global portrait of the LCMS, two (or more) decades out.** Our Synod's constituents/stakeholders will benefit from increasing consensus about the long-horizon target that we're shooting at, even as we know that any portrait of the future is by its very nature dynamic, not static. Our plans—even as we seek to construct them for sustainability and robust coverage of contingencies in the short term—will thus require continual course adjustments. Moreover, we explicitly acknowledge that it is not ours but God's will that is done—even as we pray “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20) and His return in glory draws near. For now we plan and labor, working the works of God who has called us while it is day, for we know the night is coming when no one can work (John 9:4).
- **Increase the effectiveness of our resource stewardship through continual improvements in planning, operations, and synchronization of program areas.** For instance, our common mission will certainly benefit from the following:
 - Identification of appropriate performance metrics that reflect strategic priorities: “measure what is meaningful.”
 - Benchmarking of our operating performance against objective “best practices” external standards. (This will require intentional conversations and comparisons with entities outside of our immediate organizational context.)
 - Extension of our program areas' strategic planning window to promote better annual operating and capital budget decisions.
 - Development and expanded use of planning and monitoring tools (e.g., work-process mapping) to facilitate better integration of operations with strategic plan and budget).
- **Improve regular reporting of program areas' goals, means, and results to the BNM and BIM to facilitate these mission boards' policy development and monitoring efforts.** Our ONM and OIM leadership has already started this process with the BNM and BIM over the past months.
- **Encourage and establish closer working relationships within and between program areas and Synod congregations, districts, agencies (e.g., boards, commissions, councils, educational institutions, synodwide corporate entities), auxiliaries, and other organizations.** There is an abundant wealth of high-level expertise, core competencies, resource deployments, and complementary activities occurring throughout our church body, all of which could be employed in the common good of our walking together. The ongoing challenge is intentionally to *identify* and *act* on high-value partnering or coordinating opportunities. The LCMS ideally presents a “united team” as we contend for our mission around the world!
- **Identify and implement an improved, sustainable funding model that inclusively addresses not only the Synod's cost to deploy career missionaries and other workers into their field contexts, but also the cost of programs and operations support for such missionaries and workers.** For further discussion on this topic, please see “A Word of Awareness for Convention Floor Committees and Delegates” under the OIM's Executive Summaries below. The current Network Support Missionary Model (NSM) has been very well supported by the Synod's members (ref. 2013 Res. 6-02, “To (Joy)fully Fund Career and GEO Missionaries”) and has facilitated the doubling of the number of deployed career missionaries over the past triennium, but we also are compelled to provide adequate financial resources for their programmatic work in the field and for commensurate OIM operational infrastructure support that ensures ongoing care for our missionaries—and thus, their physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being.
- **Significantly expand the reach of our COMM channels, particularly among the households of LCMS congregation members.**

COMM plays a crucial role in connecting people with opportunities to invest themselves in and provide support for ministries that yield enormous impacts on human lives, “here in time and there in eternity” (Small Catechism, Lord's Prayer Second Petition).

Executive Summaries (by Program Area)

OFFICE OF NATIONAL MISSION (ONM)

Unit Executive Director, Rev. J. Bart Day

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

While the triennium that followed the 2010 restructure of the Synod was filled with much transition and change, this past triennium has seen the solidifying of the work and a greater implementation of the mission priorities of the Synod while the ONM comes alongside districts in support of congregations, schools, and workers (3.8.2). This has been a triennium of diligent work, new opportunities, and strategic expansion in ONM.

The work of ONM has been drawn from the Synod's mission priorities (see above). ONM has focused on revitalizing congregations, schools, and workers of the Synod. That revitalization is fostered by increasing theological education, encouraging mercy work in connection with altars, enhancing collaboration in mission, strengthening our workers, and expanding our work among the youth of the church. Such revitalization leads to congregations, schools, and workers who are poised to plant new Lutheran churches.

This work takes place in individual and often unique demographic, cultural, and missiological contexts. ONM has worked to expand Synod efforts in rural, small town, urban, inner city, and college campus contexts. These are places where opportunities abound for mission. The world is literally coming to our door and now is the time for the LCMS to swing the door wide open. While future demographic realities pose challenges, the Word of the Lord does not return empty. Now is the time to be faithful. Be Lutheran. Be vigorous in the joy of revitalizing and planting churches so that the Gospel goes forth to the ends of the earth.

Two Key Initiatives

While the ONM's Detailed Reports and Commentary (provided below) are filled with program ministry updates from the work of the past triennium, I would like to highlight two key programmatic initiatives that are examples of the tremendous opportunities before the church.

First, ONM has taken seriously Synod convention mandates to plant churches (ref. 2013 Res. 1-04A, “To Encourage Church Multiplication as Means of Making New Disciples”) and revitalize congregations. Two new initiatives are being launched: *Mission Field: USA* and *re:Vitality*. These initiatives (outlined below) are ONM's response to the needs of the church to increase our work in church planting and revitalization, and they are opening new doors for ONM to serve and support the districts of the Synod. In the coming years, we expect these initiatives only to expand as we serve more congregations.

A key part of revitalization is reaching our neighbor with witness of the Gospel (ref. 2013 Res. 1-05A, “To Encourage the Congregations and People of the LCMS in the Joy of Evangelization and the Making of New Disciples”). A new lay, vocational evangelism program, *Every One His Witness*, is being developed and implemented. We pray this program will enliven the Synod in the work of evangelism.

Another component of revitalization is to more vigorously engage our communities through acts of mercy in service to our neighbor. In 2017, ONM will launch the Lutheran Young Adult Corps,

a community of faith and service providing the young adults of the LCMS with opportunities for full-time service work with Lutheran congregations, campus ministries, and community organizations. Lutheran Young Adult Corps will provide service opportunities for young adults, ages 18–26. The program will launch in St. Louis and Philadelphia, and participants will serve full time for either 3 months or 11 months depending on their interest and availability. Focusing on the core values of faith, service, and community, the Lutheran Young Adult Corps promises to be a tremendous blessing to the young adults of the LCMS.

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL MISSION (OIM)

Unit Executive Director, Rev. John Fale

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.

At the very core of our planning and operations is the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus, who commanded His Church to make disciples of all nations. Everything that we do and everyone who is employed or called to the OIM—whether working in the St. Louis office or in various parts of the world—works in service to this mission of making disciples of Jesus.

Our Most Valuable Resources

I was called to serve as OIM Executive Director in May 2015. The most rewarding part of my service is getting to know our missionaries, hearing of their work and their challenges, and praying for them. As I listen to their stories of how they became missionaries and the daily work that they do, I never cease to be amazed at how our Lord provides for the mission of His Church. God calls men and women from all walks of life and equips them for His service. Some report to me that they had envisioned becoming a missionary since they were young children, particularly after they heard a missionary speak at their congregation. Others had never imagined that they would live in a foreign country and need to learn an entirely new way of life and culture, yet they accepted a call or solemn appointment to serve when asked. Still others grew up in the mission field as children and now wish to return to continue the work of their parents or grandparents. Missionaries make personal and professional sacrifices to leave immediate and extended families, excellent paying jobs, and the comforts of living in the United States to embrace what their church has called them to do, often in conditions that can be isolating, lonely, and hard. Whatever their story, the LCMS is blessed by our Lord with men, women, and children throughout the world who serve His mission faithfully. OIM employees and missionaries are our most important and valuable resources.

Prayer and Thanksgiving

I also have come to appreciate in a new way the importance of praying regularly for both our mission and those who are called to serve this mission. As I prepared to preach on Ephesians 6:10–20 recently, I had a rather sobering epiphany. At the same time that I was preparing to preach on this text, I was working with missionaries to address a significant problem in the field. The apostle Paul's words from verse 11 captured my attention. The missionaries and I were dealing with the wiles of the devil. And we were no match. We needed the armor of God outlined in this epistle, not to fight, but to withstand the attacks of Satan through various means. I also came to realize that I do not pray as Paul instructs at verse 18, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." I now make it a point to begin and continue my day in prayer for our employees, missionaries, and our collective mission in the LCMS. I pray that by God's grace we are able to stand against the wiles of the devil and

that our Lord gives to those who are called to preach and teach the faith "utterance" that they may boldly make known the mystery of the Gospel (v. 19 KJV). Prayer is, perhaps, one of the most important things that I can do to support our missionaries and our mission.

Dear 2016 convention delegates, the LCMS needs to continue putting forth resolutions that encourage diligence in prayer for those who serve in our mission fields. I summarize comments made by a returning missionary who recently implored a group gathered in the chapel at the International Center: "Please don't stop praying for all missionaries. There are forces and powers of darkness that are constantly attacking the missionary and the missionary family. You can't imagine the daily struggles and challenges. Without God's help, we would not be able to stand one moment. So please keep praying." Amen to that.

There is much to thank God for while in convention, for the many blessings that He richly and daily provides in the OIM "out of pure, fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I owe it to Him to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him." As OIM Executive Director, I am absolutely humbled by the dedication and positive attitude of the International Missions staff in St. Louis. In the midst of increased workloads associated with doubling the number of career missionaries in the field, we have added no additional staff in St. Louis. They work hard. They have fun together. They know that their vocational calls are critical to the mission of the LCMS. I thank God for them often. We have a story to tell of how God has raised up new missionaries within the LCMS, enabling us to nearly reach our goal of doubling the number of career missionaries over the last triennium (ref. 2013 Res. 1-11, "To Recruit and Place More Career Missionaries"). We have a story to tell of what God is doing as people hear the Gospel that Jesus has set them free from their sins and has given them life. We have a story to tell of how God is using merciful acts of kindness to give people an opportunity to receive His compassion in the midst of suffering and need, which provides an open door of inquiry as people ask us why we are loving them when they have done nothing for us. Our story is a story of God's gracious activity in a sinful world through His Church in mission. It is *your* story, because the LCMS is your church. You will catch a glimpse into this story as you read the OIM's Detailed Reports and Commentary (provided below) from our office in St. Louis, our regional and area directors throughout the world, our Director of Ministry to the Armed Forces, and from our mercy program directors.

Engaging in Mission

It is remarkable to me how the paradigm for engaging in mission in the LCMS has changed over the years. It wasn't too many years ago when nearly all international mission work was done through the Synod's international mission office. However, as God has blessed our world with improved technologies in the airline industry and worldwide communication networks, it is relatively easy for congregations, districts, recognized service organizations, and mission societies to develop personal connections with Christians throughout the world and to engage in various witnessing and mercy activities throughout the world. And they are! I do not see zeal and support for international mission in the LCMS declining. Not at all. In fact, I see it growing by leaps and bounds. People of the LCMS love to become personally involved in supporting mission and mercy work, whether it is through joining a local short-term team to work in orphanages or building schools and churches, or financially sponsoring projects and sending money overseas to support a pastor, or becoming a *Together in Mission* (TIM) partner to sponsor an LCMS missionary, or supporting projects on the ground. The LCMS, collectively, brings untold capacity to international mission and mercy work. As it has become easier to make meaningful and personal connections

throughout the world, members of the LCMS are engaged directly with mission work in ways that our forbearers could not have imagined, much less considered.

Addressing the Challenge Together

With this blessing, increased mission activity across the Synod is a challenge. It is a challenge that I have addressed before the Council of Presidents, the Board of Directors, the Board for International Mission, the LCEF Leadership Conference, the Mega Church Conference, the Association of Lutheran Mission Agencies (ALMA) Conference, as well as during individual meetings with various agencies and groups. The challenge is that we (the LCMS collectively) often engage in various mission fields without collaboration, cooperation, coordination, or communication (the “4 C’s”). The result of various LCMS entities and mission societies doing work without the 4 C’s is ineffective stewardship of resources provided by God through faithful donors and causing real harm in the field by contributing to corruption, adding to internal strife within church bodies, initiating projects that are short-lived only to bring despair once interest wanes, and supporting heterodox church bodies that preach a “gospel” which, as Paul says in Galatians, is really no gospel at all.

As I have shared with the groups mentioned above, the OIM is not seeking to “control” mission activity across the Synod. In reality, OIM does not have the capacity to do all of the work that various groups are doing. What I do ask of all LCMS entities, and of rostered church workers who work for independent mission agencies—and what I ask of our delegates—is that as the “Synod,” we genuinely walk together in mission through collaboration, cooperation, coordination, and communication (ref. 2013 Res. 1-08, “To Work Together in Mission”). Are there resolutions that we—“Upon This Rock,” walking together as the Synod in convention—can prayerfully consider and adopt that will give God thanks for the increased zeal for mission all across the LCMS, that will help us to be more effective stewards of God’s gifts through donors, that will enable us to do our work in a way that significantly reduces harm to church partners throughout the world, and that will ensure that we do not support heterodox groups?

In these past months of serving the OIM, I had the opportunity to read Dr. David Kolb’s *Lutherans on the Yangtze: A Centenary Account of the Missouri Synod in China*. It is a fascinating account that traces LCMS mission work in China, and it is particularly meaningful to me because it was a former missionary to China and his wife, Rev. Lorenz and Ella Buuck, who were instrumental in me becoming a Lutheran—and then considering pastoral ministry upon leaving a career in law enforcement. But Dr. Kolb’s work is even more significant for me as OIM Executive Director because it is very evident that the early missionaries to China were always mindful of what they were leaving for future generations of LCMS missionaries further to build upon, and what they were leaving to the indigenous church. I have reflected numerous times upon the question of what the OIM is leaving to future generations of LCMS missionaries and to the indigenous church where we currently are working. There is value for the LCMS in convention to ask ourselves what our decisions will leave future generations of LCMS members and what lasting impact these decisions will have on the church.

I am very confident that the OIM is leaving to the next generation of LCMS missionaries a clear understanding of what it means to be Lutheran in mission as we confess the faith given to us in the Book of Concord. I am very confident that the OIM is leaving to the next generation of LCMS missionaries a clear mission strategy: Lutheran mission leads to Lutheran proclamation of the Gospel, which leads to Lutheran congregations, which leads to training local pastors, which leads to local Lutheran mission.

A Word of Awareness for Convention Floor Committees and Delegates

What gives me most concern when considering a legacy to the next generation of missionaries in the LCMS is whether the Synod has a sustainable model to ensure adequate resources for our mission work and the support of our missionaries that is realistic and reliable. Allow me to flesh this out a bit. At our Synod’s 2013 convention, we resolved to double the number of career missionaries in the current triennium. As I noted above, thanks be to God that we have nearly reached that goal at the time of this writing. Those missionaries are currently being funded through the Network Support Missionary Model (NSM), which continues to be very successful as individuals, congregations, and groups are providing generously. And I understand that we’ve only “scratched the surface” of LCMS congregations participating in the NSM!

What is lacking, however, is adequate financial resources for their work in the field. In the last triennium, with the near-doubling of career missionaries, our operating budget in the field has not increased proportionately. As I have asked various groups, “Which business or company would make plans to double the number of their full-time employees in three years without also having a plan that will enable them to do their work?” The reality is that in the last three years, while increasing the number of missionaries, districts are sending fewer unrestricted dollars for the Synod’s operation—and the OIM is receiving fewer of those unrestricted dollars. That doesn’t sound like a sustainable model for any operation. Nearly 100 percent of OIM’s operating budget both in St. Louis and in the field must be provided by generous donors. Giving has not kept pace with what is needed to do the work of bringing Jesus to people around the globe.

As I shared with the Council of Presidents and the Synod’s Board of Directors, I do understand that this is a complex matter and I offer no easy solution. But it is a challenge that we, the LCMS together, must address soon—or we may not have a lasting mission program to pass on to future generations.

Those who know me also know that I am not a hand-wringer, fretting needlessly over matters. I am not an alarmist. So this is no “sky is falling” report. Those who know me do know I find transparency and straight-talk to be helpful as we understand together a challenge, take ownership, and make a plan to move forward. All of this is done in faith as we serve the mission our Lord has given to us, pray that He will send laborers into the harvest, and pray that He will give us this day our daily bread.

Faith and Life in Christ

The Church is built upon the Lord Jesus, the chief cornerstone. He has redeemed poor, miserable sinners through the atoning work of His obedient life, sacrificial death, and life-giving resurrection. God has called us by this Gospel, adopting us as His own beloved in the waters of Baptism, keeping us and sustaining us in this faith and life in Christ through Word and Sacrament. Jesus has given to His Church the command to make disciples of all nations. The Church throughout the generations has understood this to be our call. It has never been easy. It has never been without struggles and challenges. It has never been without ongoing satanic assault. It has never been without redeemed sinners expressing their sinful natures in the midst of this holy work. But thanks be to God that He is rich in mercy, forgives us our sins, keeps us in this faith, brings forth reconciliation and faithful confession of His Word, and gives us many reasons to rejoice in what He is accomplishing through these frail vessels.

Pray that the Lord of the harvest will bless our beloved Synod in convention, so that we are mindful always that His Church is built upon the Rock and it is not our own, that we repent of our sins where needed, that we confess words of grace and Holy Absolution, that

we rejoice together in His work, and that we may stand against the wiles of the devil.

I pray that this summary—and the Detailed Reports and Commentary below—will provide a refreshing and inspiring glimpse into your OIM. We have a great story to tell as our Lord enables us to serve in LCMS mission. May blessings abound as you give prayerful consideration to the business of the Synod in convention.

PASTORAL EDUCATION (PE)

Interim Unit Executive Director, Rev. J. Bart Day

While the vital work of pastoral education continues, the past triennium has brought significant change to the PE office and its work processes with the departure of the former PE Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Glen Thomas, who served the PE office with distinction. His departure has led to substantive conversations with key pastoral formation stakeholders to determine how best to continue with the position and PE's future work. Critical in all conversations is how best to support pre-seminary, seminary, and post-seminary education in an effective manner. A clear path forward is in view and the permanent filling of the Executive Director position will soon begin. It is evident that such a position at the Synod is necessary to support the work of pastoral formation and to remain an advocate and voice for that work within the Synod structure.

MISSION ADVANCEMENT (MA)

Unit Executive Director, Mr. Mark Hofman

LCMS Mission Advancement plans, executes, and coordinates Synod, Inc.'s donor engagement, donor care, and fund-raising activities in order to maximize charitable gifts in support of Synod's mission and ministry.

Funding Our Mission and Ministry

Corporate Synod is continually adapting to changes in the way God's people supply financial resources intended to support national- and international-level work. In this adaptation process, the Synod and its 35 districts react to the manner in which LCMS congregations and households prefer to fund the Synod's stated mission, recognizing the following items:

- The majority of mission and ministry dollars given by households remain in the local congregation and community.
- The dollars flowing from LCMS households through their congregation and district to the national office has diminished in amount and impact over several decades (and especially so when those dollars are adjusted for inflation).
- People who live out the stewardship of all God's gifts largely prefer a direct, personal connection to ministry efforts, and they prefer the honor of being personally asked to give.
- People (stewards) who give earn the moral right to see the impact of their contributions on the lives and spiritual growth of those who they, together with the Synod, are helping.

For these reasons, corporate Synod engages LCMS people, congregations, and groups in a philanthropic relationship, primarily but not exclusively through MA. These efforts stand on the shoulders of prior leaders and fund-raising teams going back to the Synod's first Stewardship Department.

Where We Must Go—2016 and Beyond

In the coming triennium, corporate Synod and its various program areas and ministry efforts will confront both internal and external challenges to adequately funding Constitution- and convention-mandated activities. Challenges include but are not limited to the following:

- The ongoing decline in overall membership (fewer LCMS households as the source of gifts)

- A disconcertingly high annual loss in the number of active contributors (households, congregations, groups, and organizations), attributable to deaths, economic conditions, and redirected giving priorities
- Various expectations and obstacles that make it difficult for the Synod to identify, communicate with, and engage new donors to replace those lost in attrition
- A national culture increasingly hostile to charitable giving in support of religion and religiously-affiliated organizations
- Demographic shifts affecting philanthropy from one generation to the next, such as the loss of organizational loyalty or affinity
- Internal dissension, strife, and even indifference over the mission and future of the LCMS
- Confusion, disagreement, or a lack of understanding among laity regarding what the Synod is, what it does, and even why it exists; how the Synod and its program areas and ministry efforts are funded; and what value the Synod delivers
- Competition for philanthropic and charitable support from sophisticated, well-managed organizations willing to invest heavily in successful, effective advancement efforts and aggressive capital campaigns
- Congregations, and even some districts, struggling to maintain their own viability and vitality
- A failure of understanding each LCMS household well enough to appropriately and joyfully connect them to Synod's regional, national, and international work
- The shifting, often unpredictable, winds of national political and economic forces
- Dissonance regarding the value of fund-raising and the care of contributors, as well as the place of donor-directed financial support within the Synod's mission and ministry

Recognizing these and other challenges, MA articulated and implemented a long-range vision and plan to enhance corporate Synod's advancement (fund-raising and donor care) efforts by focusing on five significant goals and their related, desired outcomes. These goals will drive management decisions and the allocation of resources in order to achieve higher levels of trust, confidence, and satisfaction among people in the Synod, and to better balance fund-raising efficiency with donor care effectiveness. Synod leaders, including those in COMM and other units, will have distinct and indispensable roles to play in the plan's various strategies and desired outcomes.

Cautions and Counsel to Convention Floor Committees and Delegates

Delegates to the Synod's 2016 convention make decisions shaped by certain financial realities. *First*, the convention faces a reality that the majority of God's people in the LCMS choose to keep worship offerings at home, in their local congregation and community. No longer are national and international witness, mercy, and life together efforts—including our missionaries and seminaries—funded through the congregation's offering plate. Direct charitable gifts and organization-specific bequests have taken the place of the Sunday tithe in this regard, and those annual gifts and one-time bequests are supplied by a relatively small portion of the Synod's 800,000 households.

Second is the reality that corporate Synod has neither secret sources nor vast storehouses of money apart from LCMS district, congregation, and household donations. Districts, too, do not have secret sources or storehouses of money apart from what they receive from individuals or congregations. Congregations themselves do not have secret sources or storehouses of money apart from what their members contribute. Our professional workers alone—pastors, teachers, deaconesses, and other specialists—do not fund the Synod's ministry out of their own resources. There is no "other person" or "rich family" we can turn to for money to fix, expand, start, enhance, or otherwise fund the Synod's many ministries.

God supplies what is required for His work, and He does so through His people. He calls each person in the LCMS to make a difference in sharing the Good News through word and deed, using what He generously supplies. Thus, the issue of financial “capacity” comes second only to the question of faith and confidence in God’s promises.

Third is the reality that, at least for the foreseeable future, dollars to fund mission and ministry will have to be solicited, and that the solicitation of funds itself costs money. People give because they are invited into a partnership full of meaning and see the opportunity to impact the lives and future of others. Our care of and accountability to those giving joyfully will require money.

Delegates and committee members: please ask hard question(s) about the Synod’s known and understood financial capacity—and the ripple effects from decisions that will demand additional capacity—as the convention deliberates the Synod’s work and focus for the coming triennium. So, too, it must be conscious of sin and how a weak faith in God’s promises can hinder the mission of His Church.

Changes to Mission Advancement: 2013–16

In July 2014, the corporate Synod completed the integration of nearly all its direct gift fund-raising and donor care activities by transitioning select personnel and functions out of the LCMS Foundation into MA. This included personnel responsible for direct response (mail, email, web/Internet, and telephone solicitations), the recording and receipting of donations, management of the records database, and the analysis and reporting of advancement performance. An additional major transition moved personnel for the LCMS Joint Seminary Fund program into MA.

MA is shifting its model away from a money-focused enterprise toward an ever-increasing Gospel-centered, donor-sensitive, and post-gift accountability model. A greater emphasis is on internal cost-effectiveness, and the work required in matching people with the best gift opportunity for sharing on their terms the Good News of Jesus with others.

COMMUNICATIONS (COMM)

Unit Executive Director, Mr. David Strand

On the eve of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the Church finds herself between two epochs of communication. The *first*, relying heavily on the printed word—begun around 1440 with Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press, which propelled the mass dissemination of Luther’s teachings across Europe—empowered those who had the means to acquire the printed word and the education to read it. In the *second*, the power of the printed word has increasingly shared the stage with many other forms of communication. Today, the world of multimedia digital communication is accessible at anytime, anywhere, to anyone who has an electronic device and access to the Internet—where words, pictures, videos, music, and graphic images are being added every moment of every day, in every language, from every corner of the world.

Telling the Story ...

St. Paul encourages the people of God, “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Philippians 4:8). In the cacophony of modern communication and the myriad messaging coming at us in sound bites, images, assorted missives, and tiny bits of text, on screens large and small, how does one discern what is true, pure, honorable? And how does the Church rise above all this noise with her clarion message that “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)?

LCMS Communications serves the Synod in partnership and collaboration with, and on behalf of, the offices of the President, National Mission, International Mission, Mission Advancement, Pastoral Education and others in communicating the message of salvation as it is expressed in our Witness, Mercy, and Life Together.

Our efforts are aimed at the rostered and lay members of the Synod, the global confessional Lutheran community, and the general public. We do this through the strategic use of publications and other print materials, the Internet and digital media, videography and photography, graphic design, and telecommunications.

Your COMM team is dedicated to telling the marvelous stories of our Synod’s Witness, Mercy, and Life Together endeavors in the most compelling ways. As confessing Lutherans, we are heirs of the Reformation, truth is on our lips, and the Good News of salvation in Christ Jesus is at the core of all we do. Blessed to possess such grand and eternally important messages, we have no choice but to be relentless in finding new and better ways to propel these stories out to the world, positioning them in multiple places in print and online, where they can edify the reader who discovers them.

... To Whom?

But this is not enough. To communicate, you need someone to communicate with. Our main audience is the 2.2 million members of the LCMS, and this is the audience we are least confident we are reaching. Why? We do not have the names, addresses, or email addresses for the vast majority of lay members of the Synod. We don’t even have the correct email addresses for all the rostered workers of the Synod. Yet we rely on this latter group to share the news and stories of our Life Together with the lay members they serve.

We are grateful to those who do share our resources, but the reality is that most of our intra-Synod communication efforts fail to penetrate broadly. They stop at the church door—more precisely, they often come to a halt in the pastor’s or church secretary’s inbox—and we don’t have the wherewithal to go directly to people’s homes, whether by regular mail or email. (We say this with the utmost and all-due respect for pastors and other professional church and school workers, who we know are extremely busy with their own ministries all the time!) Our wish is not to circumvent any perceived “gatekeepers”; rather, our wish is to be allied with them in a common purpose—reaching more LCMS households with the wonderful stories of their national church. We simply want to give more laypeople the chance to avail themselves, if they wish, of our publications and other resources.

COMM’s heartfelt request of this assembled body is your encouragement and commitment to helping us connect directly with more of the laypeople of the Synod so that they, too, can be informed and inspired about the work their church is doing—and thus involve and invest themselves in that work: locally, in their districts, and on the national and international levels. Thank you—and to God alone be the glory!

Detailed Reports and Commentary (by Program Area/Ministry)

OFFICE OF NATIONAL MISSION

Reports by Program Ministries

Revitalization—Rev. Mark Wood, Director

The program *re: Vitality* is about vitality. Vitality is found wherever God’s Word is proclaimed in purity and His Sacraments are rightly administered. However, vitality doesn’t necessarily equate to sustainability (i.e., viability). Through self-assessment, action-oriented training, and outreach-integrated witnessing, *re: Vitality* guides congregations in identifying and implementing actions that increase vitality and sustainability by becoming more effective in inviting, welcoming, and receiving people from outside of the Church.

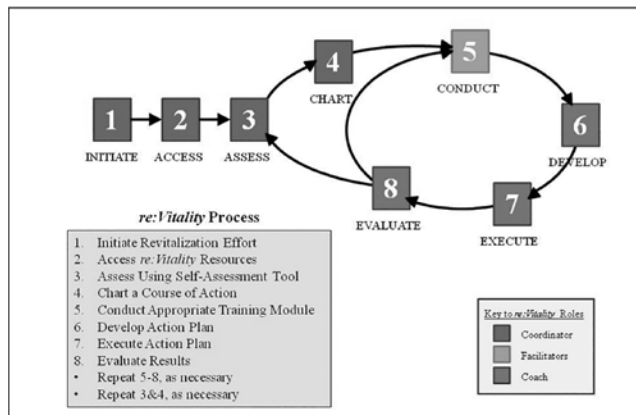
The primary objective of *re:Vitality* is to meet the large-scale needs for revitalization in the LCMS (ref. 2013 Res. 3-08A, “To Reaffirm Faithful Church Revitalization as a Priority of the Office of National Mission”). According to the latest statistics, approximately 78 percent of LCMS congregations have reached a plateau or are declining. This equates to more than 4,500 congregations that need to initiate corrective actions. This large-scale need requires a large-scale solution. The distributed model used by *re:Vitality* seeks to provide resources on the large scale needed. The program employs multiple contact points for congregations to access revitalization resources (by district or region), makes use of facilitated workshops for resource delivery by multiple facilitators, and provides a cadre of certified coaches to assist with implementation.

Our greatest revitalization need is to develop a culture in which all congregations recognize that revitalization is part of their ongoing work no matter which stage of vitality they are currently experiencing. This means that congregations that are healthy and growing would make use of *re:Vitality* resources for continued health and growth. Revitalization from strength rather than from weakness is fundamental to addressing congregational well-being through a proactive approach.

Delivering re:Vitality Resources

Delivered through video presentation in the various workshops, the content of the *re:Vitality* training materials is provided through subject matter experts in the various topics addressed (see Table 1 below for a list of *re:Vitality* training modules). The workshops are scheduled, presented, and followed up by *re:Vitality* volunteers. Lay persons, clergy, and professional church workers, active and retired, serve in the roles of coordinator, facilitator, and coach to deliver *re:Vitality* resources to congregations in a systematic and iterative approach that is focused on action rather than simply on education. (Figure 1 below demonstrates the *re:Vitality* process, including the various roles of *re:Vitality* volunteers.)

Figure 1
***re:Vitality* Process**



re:Vitality Modules

The *re:Vitality* modules are comprised of five components: (1) video instruction by a subject matter expert; (2) adult learning activities conducted in conjunction with the video instruction in a workshop setting under the guidance of a certified *re:Vitality* facilitator; (3) experiential learning activities in an actual or simulated environment; (4) prompted journaling for processing what was learned, what was experienced, and how to put it in to practice on an ongoing basis; and (5) strategic coaching.

Table 1
***re:Vitality* Modules**

Module Name	Module Description	Module Objectives/Outcomes
Connect to Disciple: Inviting, Welcoming, and Receiving People from Outside of the Church	<i>Connect to Disciple</i> is based on an outreach strategy built around the three-part process of “Create Connections, Build Relationships, Make Disciples.” It integrates personal witness with corporate outreach and makes use of the <i>Outreach Funnel</i> to illustrate the importance of intentional means of moving people through the three-part process.	- Define evangelistic outreach and identify its unique characteristics - Identify and capture the congregation’s current outreach activities - Develop working knowledge of an effective outreach strategy - Select activities that have the potential for effective outreach - Identify and mitigate obstacles and gaps in the <i>Outreach Funnel</i>
Joining in God’s Mission: Strategic Planning for the Congregation	<i>Joining in God’s Mission</i> is a comprehensive approach for guiding a congregation through the strategic planning process to identify or clarify its ministry and to produce an effective Strategic Ministry Plan for the Word and Sacrament ministry of the congregation.	- An effective working understanding of the strategic planning process - A shared vision of the congregation’s ministry - An executable Strategic Ministry Plan - Consensus on and commitment to executing the Strategic Ministry Plan
Shepherding the Strays: Actively Serving Inactive Members	<i>Shepherding the Strays</i> begins with an examination of the types of inactive members and the reasons why people become inactive. It then continues by exploring methods of approaching and serving inactive members in order to determine how best to re-engage them in Word and Sacrament ministry.	- A better understanding of and greater compassion for inactive members - A greater awareness of the need to minister to inactive members - A realistic, effective plan for ministering to inactive members - A sufficient number of trained, equipped, and motivated active members for executing the plan
Members of One Body: Engaging Members Old and New	<i>Members of One Body</i> explores the interrelationship of all of the members of the congregation and how their differing gifts are each a part of the congregation’s overall mission. From this biblical foundation, <i>Members of One Body</i> provides practical approaches for identifying giftedness and incorporating those gifts into the mission and ministry of the congregation.	- A theologically sound understanding of giftedness - An awareness that God gathers people into specific congregations based, in part, on how He has gifted them - A plan for identifying the gifts of members and incorporating members into ministries based on their giftedness

Module Name	Module Description	Module Objectives/Outcomes
For the Love of Our Neighbors: Creating Connections with Our Community	<i>For the Love of Our Neighbors</i> explores options for determining the best means of creating connections and building relationships with the people of the community, especially those who are unchurched or dechurched. It includes an overview of models for surveying, canvassing, social ministry, etc., and walks through a process of determining which models are most appropriate for the congregation's setting.	- An understanding of the relationship between Creating Connections/ Building Relationships and Making Disciples - Analyzing current outreach activities to determine their nature and effectiveness - Identifying at least one outreach activity (current or new) to implement using the <i>Connect to Disciple</i> model for outreach
Gracious Hosts: Welcoming and Responding to Guests	<i>Gracious Hosts</i> goes beyond training selected people for welcoming visitors (e.g., ushers and greeters) to creating an atmosphere in which the entire congregation takes an active role of receiving and responding to visitors as their guests.	- An awareness of how people outside of the congregation perceive the congregation when visiting - A visitor experience enhancement plan for facilities and grounds - A plan for guiding every member to developing a more welcoming environment for visitors
Revealed to Children: Reaching Families through Children's Ministry	<i>Revealed to Children</i> guides participants through the <i>Connect to Disciple</i> outreach model and then provides a process of evaluating how children's ministries such as Sunday School and VBS are being used in all three phases of outreach and how they can be used more effectively to reach the families of the children being served.	- An understanding of the relationship between Creating Connections/ Building Relationships and Making Disciples - An assessment of the barriers and gaps in how children's ministries currently move people through the <i>Connect to Disciple Outreach Funnel</i> - A plan for addressing the barriers and gaps that are limiting disciple making
Beyond the Classroom: Outreach through Lutheran Education	<i>Beyond the Classroom</i> examines the importance of integrating the ministry that occurs in the classroom with the overall Word and Sacrament ministry of the congregation—and vice versa. Using the <i>Connect to Disciple</i> outreach model, <i>Beyond the Classroom</i> provides a framework for evaluating current practices and for charting a course for a more fully integrated ministry that enhances the mission focus of an educational ministry.	- An understanding of the relationship between Creating Connections/ Building Relationships and Making Disciples - An assessment of the barriers and gaps in how educational ministries currently move people through the <i>Connect to Disciple Outreach Funnel</i> - A plan for addressing the barriers and gaps that are limiting disciple making

Module Name	Module Description	Module Objectives/Outcomes
One Flock, Many Sheep: Holistic Group Ministry	<i>One Flock, Many Sheep</i> explores the roles, dynamics, and impact of groups within a congregation and how those groups can be used for more effective outreach and assimilation. Moving beyond traditional small groups, <i>One Flock, Many Sheep</i> considers all of the types of congregational groups including those that are not typically considered ministry groups.	- A catalog of all of the congregations' groups, what they do, and how they fit into the congregation's mission - A plan for integrating existing groups into the congregation's mission and for adding new groups to meet unmet ministry needs
As Iron Sharpens Iron: Growing through Conflict	<i>As Iron Sharpens Iron</i> approaches the inevitable conflict that surfaces in a congregation as an opportunity for strengthening the congregation and its understanding of mission rather than as a problem to be solved. It lays the groundwork for directly addressing the conflict by exploring the underlying causes of conflict and works toward reconciliation leading to a renewed sense of having a shared mission in Christ.	- A process for engaging and effectively resolving conflict - An awareness that conflict can be healthful for a congregation and helpful in fostering new ideas for mission and ministry - A productive resolution (including repentance and reconciliation) of issues resulting from any conflict(s) that may have triggered the training module

The first module of *re:Vitality* is now available. *Connect to Disciple* introduces key elements of *re:Vitality* that guide and equip congregational leaders in developing an outreach strategy, evaluating the congregation's outreach approach, identifying effective outreach activities, and mapping pathways for moving people from connections to disciples.

- Designed for the leaders of a single congregation (12–18 participants)
- 6–7 hours in duration (90 minutes of instruction with the balance of time spent in activities centered on the congregation's actual circumstances)
- Each participant receives a workbook for use during the workshop and for future reference.
- No cost to the congregation.

Church Planting—Rev. Steve Schave, Director

Through our districts, the LCMS is here to support church-planting efforts through mother congregations, sponsoring circuits, or church-planting networks that may simply need support to get things started. We also wish to develop formal partnerships between struggling congregations in the inner city with healthy congregations who wish to help them restart. In urban settings, there are large groups of international immigrants, multiethnic neighborhoods, extreme poverty, and the like. For campus missions, the transient nature of the congregation and lack of mature giving create similar challenges. Those who serve in the midst of these complex and challenging mission fields are worthy of our support, including financially. Funding is needed to ensure that there are adequately trained workers in the field along with the resources needed to reach out to their communities. These missions will not be limited to our cities, but it will be a focus. The stark reality is that we are losing our footprint in cities and on our campuses, and once our ministries are lost, it is virtually impossible to get them back. Therefore, we need a quick and lasting response.

Through an initiative named *Mission Field: USA*, Church Planting will offer the following services to support church-planting efforts throughout the Synod. There will be technical support for those who are interested in a Witness, Mercy, Life Together church planting framework. We will equip them in planting distinctly Lutheran churches, based on Luther's marks of the church. For community development, we have a variety of resources to assist church plants in engaging their communities. Through Gospel Seeds, Everyone a Witness, Lutheran Housing Support, and Denarius (a new social enterprise program), we can equip new starts to play a vital role in community development. There are church-planting grants in which seed money can be requested through a grant for planting a *Mission Field: USA* church. These funds will be used to get the essentials needed to start the church. We will support collaboration as well. Some of these missions in struggling communities simply need some support from healthy congregations. Healthy partners can pray, give, and go (via mission trips) to help a mission that is actively engaged in their communities, but lack the needed resources.

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

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

these congregations to assess their community and their ministry, and look for opportunities to revitalize and engage those around them in a robust way.

To that end, RSTM partners with the districts of the LCMS in order to provide support for these rural and small town congregations. This is so they are supplied with the necessary resources to carry out mission and ministry in their specific context. In order to provide that support, training, and equipping, RSTM provides several resources.

Our primary training vehicle is our *Engaging Your Community Events* (EYC). The day-long, interactive seminars encourage congregational leaders to examine their communities and demographics, consider ways in which they can serve the unique needs of those communities, identify the assets with which their congregation has been blessed, and make a plan to utilize those resources to actively engage their community. Herein, RSTM assists those congregations in attendance to utilize practical approaches to develop an action plan to engage their community with the Gospel. During the past triennium, RSTM has partnered with 19 districts to host over 25 events. These EYC's assisted more than 700 participants representing nearly 250 congregations.

While the EYC is our primary event, RSTM also takes advantage of invitations to provide training through other events such as pastors conferences at the district and circuit level, congregations' mission festivals, and LWML and LLL events such as zone and district rallies. We have even conducted the worship service twice at the Missouri State Fair in partnership with the Missouri District LLL, and have hosted a National Mission Festival in Concordia, Missouri.

Another way RSTM provides rural and small town specific training, support, and resources for our congregations is through our annual National Rural and Small Town Mission Festival. Held in November each year, the National Mission Conference has hosted nearly 500 participants representing dozens of congregations and districts. Through these events, participants have grown and been encouraged through exploring the themes of "Planting in a Changing World," "Small Places, Big Mission," and "Standing in the Harvest Fields." These conferences bring together best practices and practitioners in a broad range of ministry areas and then shares and connects with rural and small town congregations, so that professional church workers and lay leaders in these settings will be trained to understand their role in rural culture, help trigger surface changes that lead to productive outreach ministry, and, most important, lead dynamic change by being in God's Word.

A new initiative to support church workers was kicked off in 2015 at the first National Worker-Priest Respite Retreat. In partnership with Grace Place Wellness Ministries, RSTM hosted a bi-vocational pastors retreat for pastors and their families who are currently engaged in that unique type of ministry. Because bi-vocational pastors and their families are seldom supported in the very unique challenges of that type of ministry model, RSTM sought to provide for them a time of rest and retreat. The inaugural event hosted five bi-vocational pastors and their families for three days at our offices in Concordia, Missouri. This event was made possible through grants funding by two LWML Districts in Nebraska and South Dakota.

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

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

In an effort to promote continuity of support as well as provide another avenue for training and resources, RSTM seeks to develop and strengthen relationships with district rural and small town mission task forces. We are also providing training to districts which currently do not have these groups to promote the support of RSTM congregations.

RSTM, through its various training opportunities, continues to assist congregations as they look at ways in which they can remain viable and active in the ministry area they have been called to serve. One way that we are accomplishing this is to provide resources and leadership training to assist congregations in considering new models for ministry sensitive to the unique needs of staffing, distance, properties, governance, scheduling, ministry priorities, relationships of congregations, and changing demographics of rural and small town America (ref. 2013 Res. 3-07A, “To Further Promote Mission Awareness, Support, Collaboration, and Coordination for Rural and Small Town, Urban and Inner City, and Suburban Ministry”).

Finally, the RSTM office regularly receives emails and phone calls seeking various kinds of resources. We either supply the congregation or pastors with the information/resources they require or act as a clearinghouse, connecting them with those who can best meet their needs. We currently are assisting congregations in transitioning into life with a new pastor as well as providing information and support to all new seminary graduates placed in rural and small town settings. This individual attention to the needs of our constituent congregations often proves to be invaluable as they seldom have another way to access resources specifically geared toward the unique setting of the rural and small town congregations. Because of this, RSTM frequently receives comments such as this email response “I don’t think I properly said THANK YOU for the wonderful resources you made available to us. I really appreciate your help, knowledge, and insight. Our church is trying to improve our assimilation process, and we’re looking at anything we can find. I may be in touch in the future as our committee gets rolling.”

Urban and Inner City Mission—Rev. Steve Schave, Director

Urban and inner city congregations and mercy agencies find themselves in a unique ministry context. Cities are the fastest-growing segment of our nation with the greatest opportunity for global mission and multiethnic ministry. Poverty, crime, and tension are marks of the inner city. These complexities can cause our work to be frustrating and even dangerous. Working with the poor, homeless, and those re-entering society will also challenge the conventional understanding of a congregation being completely self-supporting. To that end, the Synod in convention has mandated us to be working to increase significantly our support of congregations in urban and inner-city settings (2013 Res. 3-07A). The obvious reason for this mandate is that we are losing ground in the city, and we must bring all of our resources to bear to reverse this trend. The harvest is plenty, the needs are great,

and we have the chance to joyfully meet the challenges ahead to reach the lost in this wonderfully fulfilling mission. Christ alone, through the Means of Grace, can lead us in the fight in the streets of our cities. The cross then is the heart of this mission, centered on God’s Word and Sacraments and anchored by our altars. Preaching Christ crucified is the very key to the city.

Because of the unique context, Urban and Inner City Mission (UICM) is worthy of the definition of a new category for those who do work in the city (ref. 2013 Res. 3-07A, “To Further Promote Mission Awareness, Support, Collaboration, and Coordination for Rural and Small Town, Urban and Inner City, and Suburban Ministry”). This will include both clergy and laity. Needed for UICM are pastors, deaconesses, administrators, mission teams, youth, and the like. Many UICM congregations and agencies are short staffed, and we must find creative ways to build their capacity. While the core of UICM is Word and Sacrament ministry, no congregation can be an island apart from her community. Opportunities abound to play a vital role in partnerships with local government, corporations, development corporations, and other agencies to rejuvenate communities and their economies. Congregations must be intentional and diligent in that their outreach is anchored by their altars, but through vocational and corporate acts of mercy and witness they are given opportunities to seek the lost. Certainly only by God’s Means of Grace can there be a transformative change in the lives of others.

Creative solutions are needed to meet these needs based on the limited resources of UICM congregations and agencies. Through the use of round tables, think tanks, and networks, we will find ways to share ideas, provide mutual consolation, develop plans and strategies, and build upon our fellowship. Nearly every department in the ONM has something to offer in significantly increasing the support of our urban congregations. This can be done through contributions of their knowledge in which they are subject matter experts. Our districts and congregations can offer their ideas and input as well. A wide variety of seminars, conferences, and webinars can therefore be offered. So, too, case studies and papers can be developed that are educational, practical, or simply encouraging. Through the use of the LCMS website and social media, resources will be developed to create awareness and promote the opportunity to serve and give. Just as with international missionaries using the NSM model, we need to identify creative ways to support urban missions. This will require an aggressive campaign to identify those who will be supporters of this work. These supporters are needed to pray/give/go to keep Christ in our cities.

Funding is also critical for us to invest in our urban core. The intention of the newly created “Save Our Cities” fund is to provide a perpetual source of income for neighborhood revitalization and community development that would be attractive to benevolent individuals, faith-based organizations, and corporations interested in social responsibility. These funds will be used to support urban missionaries and advocates, urban training centers, and assisting those in need to move from poverty to wholeness. Projects that will be considered for funding will include affordable aging services, advocacy, community re-entry, housing/transitional housing/blight improvement, asset-based community planning, social enterprise, programming for at-risk youth, pregnancy resources, urban education, substance-abuse recovery, and basic needs. The advantage of these services and programs is that not only will they be empowering, but also will they be truly transformative for communities and individuals. The ultimate goal then is to transform chaos, death, and decay in our cities in to peace, life, and renewal.

Campus Ministry: LCMS U—Rev. Marcus Zill, Director

One of the greatest tasks each generation has is handing over the faith to the one that follows it. It’s no secret to anyone that we lose

many of our youth not just during their college years but even well beforehand. This must change, and we must engage in increasing efforts to retain them through their high school years and keep them connected during college. This need is all the more urgent given the increasing turmoil on our nation's campuses, the soft persecution that exists toward a Christian worldview in academia, and the increasing strains on religious liberty and the freedom of expression.

Our universities are great incubators of ideas, both good and bad. The nation's college campuses are also a vast fertile mission field with the ever-growing influx of international and unchurched students. It is time for us to step up our efforts in the academic square not only for our own youth, but also for the sake of reaching the atheists and agnostics alike, and the increasing need to defend our opportunities for religious expression and spiritual pursuits in and around our academic communities (ref. 2013 Res. 1-15A, "To Encourage Further Support for Campus Ministry").

We have witnessed a rebirth and revitalization of direct support for campus ministry in the Synod. While the Synod went under a comprehensive internal restructure in the previous triennium, campus ministry was an area actually added back into the structure. The Synod's 2013 convention commended all those involved in campus ministry, thanked those organizations involved directly in helping support campus ministry over the last decade, transitioned from utilization of the name Lutheran Student Fellowship, and recognized the efforts of the ONM through LCMS U to further expand the development of campus ministry across the Synod.

This progress began earlier in 2013 with the UNWRAPPED National Campus Ministry Conference held at Saint Louis University, attended by approximately 425 college students and those who work with them. Students focused on themes related to the apologetic task and the defense of the faith, while also having opportunities for fun and the daily gathering around Christ's Word in prayer and song. UNWRAPPED was the largest dedicated LCMS college student gathering in the past 40 years and was a fitting occasion to launch LCMS U, the Synod's new initiative for campus ministry.

Much of the focus during the last triennium has been on developing a structure for LCMS U and integrating campus ministry within the Synod's new structure. Three full-time campus pastors helped directly with these efforts in addition to their regular campus ministry duties. Rev. Marcus Zill served as the LCMS U Coordinator along with Rev. Ian Pacey and Rev. Jay Winters as Assistant Coordinators, until Zill was called as Director of Campus Ministry and LCMS U in the summer of 2014. This position represented the first full-time dedicated Synod staff position to directly support campus ministry since 2002.

A major highlight of the past triennium was the TABOO National Campus Ministry Conference in January 2015, held once again at Saint Louis University, attended by 475 students and campus ministry workers representing over 100 colleges and universities. The main focus of TABOO was addressing issues relating to marriage and sexuality, including those things which are not often talked about, including dialogue about the sanctity of marriage and witnessing to those who have embraced the homosexual lifestyle. A banquet was also held on the Feast of the Epiphany to highlight GEO (Globally Engaged Outreach) mission opportunities before having the Divine Service at Concordia Seminary. A special Epiphany offering was taken to continue the support of International Student Ministry.

A new radio program and podcast, *The Student Union*, was developed in the summer of 2015 in conjunction with KFUD to serve as a weekly opportunity to connect college students, campus ministry workers, parents, and all who love the young people of the church. Topics range from apologetic interests, the intersection of science and

academic pursuits, issues of marriage and sexuality, the support of religious liberty, and the cultivation of one's devotional life.

Ultimately, all campus ministry is local. The heart and core of our efforts takes place in, with, and through local congregations. There are now more than 200 intentional LCMS U chapters throughout the United States, ranging in size from large full-time campus ministries and part-time town/gown congregations to congregations taking initiative to reach out to students at a nearby college campus. In some circumstances, campus ministries are supported directly by districts, entire circuits, or regional mission societies and are recognized service organizations.

In the upcoming triennium, the concept of LCMS U as a virtual campus connecting college students wherever they go to school, as well as those who work with them, will be fleshed out and expanded. The goal is to help engage and support college students and campus ministry workers by providing those resources and events to help them at the local level, as well as help congregations become more intentional in caring for their own college students and finding opportunities to engage in outreach on local campuses. New training opportunities will be provided for campus workers and volunteers as well as encouragement and support for LCMS faculty members who work at public or non-LCMS private colleges and universities. Consultation will continue to be provided for existing campus ministries as they seek to expand their outreach efforts and new efforts throughout the Synod and beyond.

In addition to having conferences for college students and developing various additional resources for campus ministries, congregations, college students, and parents, in the upcoming triennium the following will be developed and introduced:

- A COLLEGE BOUND worldview boot camp(s) and resources to provide high school seniors with the opportunity to get prepared for the world they are going to step into while they are yet beginning to make preparations to go to college
- Fall and spring semester "roundtables" on issues related to campus ministry, its support, and expansion, utilizing subject matter experts and designated campus workers to help aid the development of resources for local implementation
- An expanded devotional and witnessing tool, *The College Companion*, is in development with CPH as a next generation of the pocket-size *Blessings and Prayers for College Students*
- The next National Campus Ministry Conference, LIBERTY, will be held in early January of 2017 and will focus on issues surrounding the confession of faith in the public square and the defense of religious liberty
- An International Campus Ministry Conference is in development to serve as a study abroad educational experience for LCMS students as well as an opportunity for collaboration with college students and campus ministry workers in international partner churches
- The development of regional college retreats that will be simultaneously live-streamed under the theme HERITAGE—to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017
- Close work with the *Lutheran Young Adult Corps*, the Synod's *Free to be Faithful* initiative, and the OIM to provide service and outreach opportunities for college-age youth

Though the times on campus are getting increasingly tougher, the opportunities are equally ripe for witness and outreach, and the future is bright for campus ministry as we continue to develop LCMS U.

There are ultimately four reasons to CARE about campus ministry that we will seek to champion through LCMS U going forward:

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

May God continue to bless all the young people of the Church; our collective efforts at the Synod, district, and congregational levels

to support them; and the opportunities that we have to witness in the academic square and reach the lost for the sake of the Gospel.

Black Ministry—Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray, Director

Over the last triennium, Black and African Ministry has encouraged and provided resources for the congregations and leaders of the Synod as the director has visited and collaborated in and with 23 districts in Black and African Ministry (ref. 2013 Res. 3-09, “To Continue to Support and Promote Black Ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod”).

Two advisory councils have been created to better serve leaders and congregations: the Black Ministry Advisory Council and the African Ministry Advisory Council. Each council has 10 regional leaders who meet four times a year, partnering individually and together to identify possibilities and opportunities to encourage, equip, and empower local leaders and congregations in witness, mercy, and life together opportunities. Three areas of interest were created: recruitment, revitalization, and reconciliation.

In partnership with the LCMS Black Clergy Caucus, the director meets each year in a congregation leaders leadership workshop and pastoral advisory meeting to aid pastors and leaders in identifying resources and opportunities for in-reach and outreach ministries.

Highlights of the triennium include the following:

- In July 2014, Black Ministry Family Convocation was held in Kansas City, Missouri, under the theme “Worship, Word, Witness” with 464 registrations (394 adults and 70 children), 80 congregations represented, and 18 of 25 districts with Black/African congregations.
- In 2014, 20 Summer Domestic Grants were given to congregations, which had a tremendous impact on African/Black Ministry in reaching community children with summer mentoring, tutorial programs, and VBS programs.
- In 2015, *The First Rosa Young* film was finished, with 50 previews among LCMS congregations, schools, districts, and universities. The film will be released to congregations, schools, and universities in January 2016. There is preparation to start new Rosa Young Academies and child-care centers in 2017.
- Financial aid is given each year to five historic schools in Black Ministry.
- Each year, financial aid is given to support seminarians at both of our seminaries. Presently, there are eight students enrolled.
- In 2016, mini-regional Black Family Conventions will be held.
- We are preparing for the 2017 Black Ministry Family Convocation in the Southern District, where we anticipate 1,000 attendees.
- There is the potential of new mission starts through the *Mission Field: USA* initiative.
- We are expanding partnership with the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology program at Concordia Seminary with Dr. John Loum.

Hispanic Ministry—Rev. Dr. Carlos Hernandez, Director

This ethnic ministry of the ONM is easily the most challenging with a US Hispanic population of 55.4 million (17.4 percent of US population) and projected to increase to 119 million by 2060. With a medium age of 29, Hispanics are the youngest of all US ethnic populations.

Los Angeles County has the largest concentration of Hispanics with 4.9 million, followed by Harris County in Houston, Texas, with 1.9 million and Dade County in Miami, Florida, with 1.8 million. States with the largest Hispanic population are as follows:

- California—15.0 million
- Texas—10.4 million
- Florida—4.8 million

For some time, after the Rev. Dr. Roberto Gonzalez accepted a call to Redeemer in Irving, Texas, the Synod’s National Missions did not fill the position of Hispanic Counselor which had been an established post first held by Rev. Carlos Puig. While the decision not to fill this

position held by Dr. Gonzalez might have been part of a studied and planned national mission strategy, LCMS Hispanics across the country saw it as disengagement. A bright spot was the appointment of a Blue Ribbon Task Force on Hispanic Ministry that concluded that a national Hispanic Counselor was the “number one” need, followed by initiatives that addressed the isolation of LCMS Hispanics and their desire for a greater voice around the LCMS table.

In 2010, Rev. Dr. Carlos Hernandez was appointed to assume the additional duties associated with Hispanic ministries and integrate and align them into the other duties he held within the newly restructured ONM.

Re-engagement was fundamental for fulfilling the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Hispanic Ministry’s desire not to be isolated and marginalized. By aligning and integrating the work of the Hispanic Counselor with other ministries in the ONM, Hispanic workers and congregations gained immediate and direct access to this Synod resource they were not even aware of.

We currently have a Hispanic ministry staff of four: three contracted workers and Rev. Dr. Hernandez. The contracted staff are:

- Rev. Ruben Dominguez, pastor, El Buen Pastor, McAllen, Texas
- Deaconess Luz Guerrero, adjunct professor of Spanish language and literature, Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota
- Rev. Zabdi Lopez, pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Gridley, California

The first and foremost responsibility that has been assumed by the Hispanic ministry staff is the care of workers. Frequent calls are made to workers across the country. Deaconess Luz Guerrero pays close attention to the 25 Hispanic deaconesses we now have on the Synod’s roster. Even just a, *Hola, como has estado?* “Hello, how have you been?” is a welcoming balm for workers often working alone without remuneration as “worker-priests.” Conversation, a sympathetic ear, and a prayer lift the spirits of our Hispanic workers and energizes them for their Gospel proclamation ministries.

What we frequently encounter in these conversations is exactly what the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Hispanic Ministry contended: Hispanic workers feel isolated and alone in their Hispanic ministry efforts. So the work of our staff of calling, encouraging, and even visiting on-site is most appreciated and welcomed.

The team of four also responds to requests from the field to strengthen existing Hispanic ministries. One way in which we have been able to fulfill this desired outcome is through assisting Hispanic ministries to become chartered members of the Synod. Becoming a chartered congregation not only enables Hispanic congregations to have a voice, vote, and recognized presence in their respective district, but also it encourages their members to greater participation and a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves.

The *Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs* community outreach initiative (ref. 2013 Res. 2-11, “To Encourage Districts and Congregations to Utilize the *Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs* Training Process”) has also been presented in Spanish to a number of Hispanic congregations throughout the Synod, as well as at the National Hispanic Convention in Tampa in July of 2015. This service is especially important since many of our Hispanic ministries and congregations seem to quickly plateau. Like many of our Anglo congregations, they lack the training to get out of their sanctuaries and relate effectively and powerfully with their communities, beginning with mercy and responding under the Holy Spirit to opportunities to share a Gospel witness.

A good example of replanting a Hispanic congregation that had serious stagnation is El Calvario Lutheran Church in Brownsville, Texas. The church was organized and chartered in the 1940s. It has enjoyed the support of the Texas District for many years as well as long-term, faithful pastorates. In recent years, however, the congregation, blocks from the Mexican border and from the University

of Texas at Brownsville, has dwindled to a small-but-spirited core, unable to financially support a pastor.

Yet opportunities for Gospel proclamation abound as Brownsville grows, strategically located on the border and gateway to Central and South America. Through the *Mission Field: USA* initiative, the congregation and the Texas District are poised to call and place a worker who will (1) plant a new, second/third-generation Hispanic congregation in north Brownsville, (2) begin a campus ministry at the University of Texas at Brownsville, and (3) continue serving El Calvario.

Besides the new plant in north Brownsville in the planning stage, we have partnered with the respective district in planting new work in Beardstown, Illinois, and Sheboygan, Wisconsin. We also regularly consult with Grace Latino Ministries of Escondido, California, in their extensive work of church planting. Other districts are in the initial stages of planting Hispanic ministries and have consulted us about future collaboration.

Every One His Witness—Rev. Mark Wood, Director

Every One His Witness was developed from the ground up as a Lutheran evangelism program. It considers the real world context in which Lutherans find themselves as witnesses of Jesus Christ. Building on the solid foundation of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, *Every One His Witness* equips Lutherans to engage unchurched people regardless of their worldviews. It emphasizes evangelism as a work of God and the role of witnesses as instruments through whom the Lord brings His Word to those whom He has chosen for eternal life. *Every One His Witness* puts sound doctrine into practical action through a relational approach for sharing the faith with the people whom God has placed alongside His witnesses in their everyday lives.

Every One His Witness is made up of two components. The first component is a single unit called the Core Module. It provides the foundational elements of *Every One His Witness* and is a prerequisite for the second component. That second component is a collection of modules that apply the elements of the Core Module to specific witnessing contexts. These modules are called Context Modules.

Core Module

The core module of *Every One His Witness* is made up of three major components:

1. The theological basis for witnessing
2. The “LASSIE” approach for witnessing
3. The use of Luther’s Small Catechism as a resource for witnessing

The theological basis for witnessing starts by addressing and debunking common misunderstandings of evangelism, especially those which have resulted from the influences of American Evangelicalism (i.e., Arminianism). From a clean starting point, *Every One His Witness* continues by demonstrating the correct understanding of evangelism as an activity centered in Jesus Christ (i.e., evangelism is “all about Jesus”). Using the doctrine of election by grace as the foundation for witnessing, *Every One His Witness* dismisses Law-based approaches to moving people to action and puts forward a Gospel-based motivation for joining the triune God in His mission as His instruments for seeking and saving those who are lost.

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

provides important insights into the impact that the doctrine of election by grace has on evangelism.

LASSIE provides an approach that encourages witnessing as a natural activity in a disciple’s everyday life in the context of vocational relationships. A fundamental element of this approach is the explicit and intentional sharing of God’s Word “with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). To this end, *Every One His Witness* makes use of Luther’s Small Catechism in all aspects of LASSIE to guide the witness in discerning the unchurched person’s worldview, gaining insight into the person’s spiritual condition, discovering a point of connection with the person, and determining what to share with the person when speaking of Jesus (e.g., Law or Gospel, specific topics, appropriate passages of Scripture).

Core Module Training

Training in the Core Module is conducted in a workshop setting. The workshop is a video-based presentation supplemented with learning activities. It is conducted with a team of two or more certified facilitators based on two facilitators for groups up to 30 participants and one additional facilitator for every 15 additional participants. The recommended maximum number of participants in a workshop is 60.

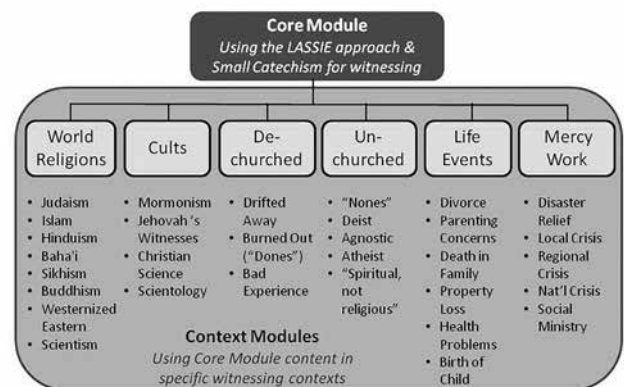
The Core Module training covers the three components of *Every One His Witness* in five sessions:

- Witnessing: What’s It All About?
- You Are a Witness—What Does This Mean?
- Vocation and Witness
- LASSIE: Relational, Contextual Witnessing
- Going, Planting, Watering ... and Waiting Expectantly

Core Module training can be conducted in a variety of settings including single congregations, circuit forums, mission festivals, conferences, district events, etc. It is approximately 7 hours in duration and can be held on a single day or be split over two days (e.g., Friday from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. and Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to noon).

Given the interactive nature of the Core Module training, it does not lend itself to online instruction. It is only offered in a workshop setting. Core Module training is a prerequisite for all Context Module training sessions.

Figure 2
Every One His Witness Modules



Context Modules

The Core Module of *Every One His Witness* equips Lutherans to be effective witnesses of Jesus in a general way. Context Modules build on that to equip disciples for speaking of Jesus to people in specific contexts. Following the pattern and structure of the Core Module, especially the use of the LASSIE approach for witnessing, each Context Module addresses the particular challenges of witnessing to unchurched people in that specific context. Categories of

Context Modules include witnessing to cult members, witnessing in conjunction with mercy work, witnessing to people who are de-churched, witnessing to a person experiencing a personal crisis, and witnessing during public events (e.g., street evangelism). Specific Context Modules include witnessing to Mormons, witnessing to former Lutherans, witnessing to a person grieving the sudden death of a loved one, and witnessing on or near college campuses. Each Context Module features the expertise and experiences of people who are subject matter experts in the specific application addressed in that module.

Context Module Training

Training for Context Modules is structured according to the LASSIE approach. The training provides specific information and recommendations for applying LASSIE to the witnessing context addressed by the module. Apart from a brief introduction to the module, all Context Module training content is developed and presented using the LASSIE approach.

Because Context Module training is supplemental training, access to the training sessions is only available to participants who have successfully completed the *Every One His Witness* Core Module training.

Context Module training is available online. Workshop versions of the training may be conducted if a venue provides an adequate number of interested participants who are eligible to enroll in Context Module training (e.g., a break-out session in a conference, preparation for a focused evangelism event).

Context Case Studies

Case Studies for each witnessing context addressed by a Context Module are available as resources for a witness seeking to learn from other people's witnessing experiences. Additions to the library of Case Studies are incorporated as new experiences are captured and documented as Case Studies. This library is available online and available to participants who have completed both the *Every One His Witness* Core Module training and the corresponding Context Module training.

Context Forums (Evangelism "Crowd-Sourcing")

Online forums for specific witnessing contexts provide witnesses the opportunity to communicate and collaborate with people across the Synod who have shared interests and experiences in that witnessing context. Context Forums leverage the vast collective knowledge of LCMS members to address questions, challenges, opportunities, issues, etc. that are not addressed in the Core Module or Context Module training.

Context Forums are available to people who have completed both the Core Module training and corresponding Context Module training. In addition to having limited access, Context Forums are moderated to mitigate abuses.

Supplemental Resources

Supplemental Resources are tools that assist people with using the *Every One His Witness* Primary Resources. While Primary Resources are provided at no cost to the participants, Supplemental Resources will be available for purchase by those who wish to make use of them.

- LASSIE Road Map
 - o The LASSIE Road Map is a printed, folded card that assists the witness with keeping track of where he is in witnessing to a specific unchurched person. Guiding questions and assessments for each part of the LASSIE approach provide opportunities for evaluation, reflection, and determining how to proceed with that person.
 - o The LASSIE Road Map app will provide this resource in an electronic format for IOS or Android devices.
- *Every One His Witness* Day Planner/Tracker
 - o The *Every One His Witness* Day Planner/Tracker is a personal

calendar ordered around an individual's life as a steward-servant of Jesus Christ. It includes the key components of the LASSIE Road Map. Day planning, month-at-a-glance, and week-at-a-glance perspectives help incorporate witnessing into everyday activities.

- o The *Every One His Witness* Day Planner/Tracker app will provide this resource in an electronic format for IOS or Android devices.

Life and Health Ministries—Stephanie Neugebauer, Director

Life Ministry carries the banner both in our church body and the culture at large that all life is sacred from conception until natural death. Through a variety of resources, publications, and programs, Life Ministry supports and encourages life as made in the image of God.

Although abortion and end-of-life issues are perhaps the most demanding issues of the present culture, Life Ministry is also committed to educating and encouraging God's people in matters of marriage, family, human sexuality, bioethics, disability, and society. Publications stemming from Life Ministry include a quarterly publication *Notes for Life*, materials to promote the observance of Life Sunday, and more than 250 articles via the Life Library. Currently, Life Ministry is coordinating with the Office of the President to update nine of the *What About* pamphlets concerning life issues.

The Sanctity of Human Life Committee serves as an extension of Life Ministry, providing helpful resources, publications, and guidance on current trends in the church and culture regarding life. During this last triennium, the committee has added to its numbers and is currently functioning at its maximum of 14 members. In addition, Life Ministry works in concert with Lutherans for Life to support and uphold district life coordinators. District life coordinators are appointed by the district president and serve as a link between the Synod and districts by which life resources can be communicated and promoted. Twenty-six of the 35 districts are currently represented, leaving nine districts without a district life coordinator.

In addition to these resources, Life Ministry has developed a free educational curriculum entitled *Looking at Life in the Womb* for use in middle school and high school classrooms. Comprised of six modules and a short video, this curriculum brings the miracle and sanctity of human life into the classroom through the use of ultrasound technology. The beauty of this program is that the classroom modules can accommodate several disciplines, including science, mathematics, history, language arts, and religion. By providing such a versatile curriculum, it is the goal of Life Ministry to reach both public and parochial schools, Christian and unchurched students alike, home-schooling families, youth groups, and confirmation students. As of date, Life Ministry has sent out more than 1,000 copies of *Looking at Life in the Womb*. The goal is to begin work on adapting the curriculum for elementary students by 2017. Life Ministry is also partnering with Lutherans for Life to provide fetal models (via *Owen's Mission*) to all Lutheran schools who order the curriculum.

Finally, Life Ministry continues to represent the LCMS at the March for Life, which takes place both in Washington DC and San Francisco, California. In conjunction with the March for Life in Washington DC, Life Ministry will host its 2017 Life Conference.

Life Ministry will continue to work tirelessly, carrying the banner for our church to the world that all human life is sacred. However, in moving forward, Life Ministry has identified contemporary life issues which it is currently not fit for handling, either due to budget constraints, resource availability, or lack of expertise. Topics such as contraception, in vitro fertilization, embryo adoption, and the abortion exception are issues that need great and immediate attention. In order to properly address this need, Life Ministry strongly supports the formation of a Synod task force that will appropriately respond to these issues.

Health Ministry complements the outreach of the church by promoting Christ-centered health and wellness of body, mind, and spirit. Through its domestic and international programs, Health Ministry has an expansive reach which delivers health and wellness education and support to individuals and churches in need.

Parish nursing is a division of Health Ministry which has reach across all 35 districts. The parish nurse is a registered nurse who is committed to health ministry, working alongside the pastor within the context of a congregation to deliver wellness programs in support of the pastoral ministry. The parish nursing program currently offers continuing education for their registered nurses via a monthly video-based educational session, with topics revolving around theology, medicine, and patient care. The goal for the parish nurse program is to coordinate efforts with the Concordia University System so that students may consider parish nursing following their collegiate training. In addition, the parish nurse program is looking for ways to expand their reach internationally, with the long-term goal of providing each region with one or two trained LCMS parish nurses.

Mercy Medical Teams is another extension of Health Ministry wherein the church and her people are served globally. Mercy Medical Teams is a short-term volunteer program which offers medical professionals, lay people, and pastors opportunities to serve abroad in a variety of clinical and health-related settings. These teams are trained by the LCMS and work in conjunction with LCMS partner churches and international clinics to deliver primary care to countries such as Kenya, Haiti, Madagascar, Guatemala, and Indonesia. Since the program's founding in 2006, more than 40,000 patients have been served, and more than one million dollars in medication has been delivered. It is the vision that within the next year, Mercy Medical Teams will be in partnership with three additional countries.

Health Ministry also recognizes that greater focus must be had for the health and wellness of professional church workers and their families. Health Ministry began efforts in 2015 to coordinate with Specialized Pastoral Ministry, recognized service organizations, and Concordia Plan Services to create a concise resource which will lay out professional counseling options, mental health resources, and physical health programs for use by LCMS called workers.

Specialized Pastoral Ministry—Rev. Joel Hempel, Interim Director

The primary responsibility of Specialized Pastoral Ministry (SPM) is the ecclesiastical endorsement of ordained and commissioned ministers of the Gospel who are serving as chaplains in institutions and on the streets with police and fire departments, pastoral counselors, and clinical pastoral educators. Before endorsement is complete, the applicant's district president is asked to give his support and letter of good standing when the minister first applies, and then his concurrence at the end of the process.

There are 550 specialized pastoral ministers, 200 are endorsed. Since the Synod's 2013 convention, 28 have become fully endorsed by SPM or received a time-limited endorsement in order to apply for a ministry position and complete their training. In addition, 18 are in different stages of applying and/or addressing the requirements for endorsement (additional information about endorsement requirements may be found in the Ecclesiastical Endorsement Manual linked on the SPM webpage at www.lcms.org/spm). Endorsement is maintained by completing 15 hours of continuing education annually, maintaining active church membership and circuit/district involvement, adhering to the SPM Code of Ethics, completing a biannual peer review, and submitting an annual report.

Ministerial health and wellness is vital to the well-being of the minister and the ministry! Thus collegial support ranks high on the list of ministry opportunities in the SPM office (ref. 2013 Res. 1-12, "To Recognize and Give Thanks for Military and Institutional

Chaplains"). Support takes many forms: educational events/retreats (regional, semiannual, and free); Emergency Services Chaplaincy (ESC) day conferences (annual); prison ministry biennial conferences sponsored by the Southern Illinois District (ref. 2013 Res. 1-13A, "To Designate District Coordinators for Prison and Jail Ministry") funded/supported by ONM SPM; pastoral care, consultation, and mentoring via phone, email, and in person; online learning group in pastoral care skills; *Pastoral Touch* (triennial publication); LCMS periodicals that highlight and lift up our constituents and their ministries; web resources; SPM scholarships for Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and other education that leads to endorsement; and anniversary acknowledgements (soon to be started).

Many who serve in SPM are doing so without a divine call. If they do not have a call from a congregation, RSO, or district, they are "on their own," ministering under contract in a secular institution. Starting in 2014, the Board for National Mission (BNM) has made available a divine call for those serving within an institution as a full-time chaplain or pastoral counselor. Since implemented, two divine calls have been issued (ref. 2013 Res. 2-05B, "To Allow Extension of Calls to Specialized Pastoral Ministers").

SPM is comprised of an aging population of LCMS ministers. Younger, qualified ordained and commissioned ministers are needed to fill the gap that is being created due to retirements. Without intentional recruitment of those men and women our Lord wants in SPM, the LCMS will become under- or unrepresented on the front lines of ministry outside of the parish. A newly established SPM Recruitment Task Force has been charged with bringing SPM to the awareness of young men and women going into ministry so that they can consider SPM as a viable vocational calling. Many avenues are being considered as means for recruitment.

Emergency Services Chaplains are mostly law enforcement and fire department chaplains who serve as volunteers in their local communities. They are trained, credentialed, and encouraged to be SPM-endorsed as representatives of the LCMS. In February 2015, the SPM ecclesiastical endorsement of Emergency Services Chaplains was authorized by the Council of Presidents. Since then, 13 have become endorsed. Of those who have become endorsed in ESC, four have sought additional training to serve as Disaster Response Chaplains (DRC). From the beginning of the DRC ministry two years ago, there have been three deployments (Pilger, Nebraska; Moore, Oklahoma; and Delmont, South Dakota).

Ministerial care (that is, care of the called ministers and their families) is the church's responsibility as much as pastoral care of the church is the called staff's responsibility. The SPM Interim Director, along with the Director of Church and Community Engagement and Director of Life and Health with ONM Executive Director Bart Day, is seeking to assess how the ONM can best serve districts and district presidents in the provision of additional spiritual support and emotional care to ministers of the Gospel and their families. Our purposes include (a) identifying already existing resources (both larger organizations serving the Synod as well as local ministries) that have been effective in the area of worker wellness; (b) assessing which resources would be beneficial for synodwide promotion; (c) determining the gaps in service; and (d) working with districts to fill the gaps as needed.

Prisons are one of the largest institutions in the USA. Prison ministry is one of the many privileged responsibilities of SPM. In addition to the conferences that SPM funds and in addition to the six full-time prison and jail chaplains we have nationwide, many parish pastors and congregations are engaged in local prison ministry—many of whom are under the enabling and supportive eye of the Southern Illinois District (SID)—a partner with SPM. Also, the SPM office receives weekly requests from inmates and families of incarcerated persons

looking for resources and prayer support. SPM is pleased to provide devotional materials, pastoral care to family members, and referrals to nearby parish pastors.

Because SPM is outside the mainstream of LCMS parish ministry, those who serve in SPM can feel isolated, misunderstood, and underappreciated. The creation of local peer support groups is one way to overcome the loneliness sometimes associated with those in SPM. Since the last Synod convention, the SPM office has formed a pilot peer support group that has met monthly for two years. Effort is now underway to promote the organizing of SPM support groups nationwide.

Cooperation in Externals is the way in which SPM can maintain dialogue and collegiality with ministers from other church bodies who are engaged in similar specialized pastoral contexts. Collegial interactions include the following:

- Membership and attendance at national SPM-related professional organizations
- Shared editorial responsibility with the ELCA for the *Caring Connections* online journal
- Co-sponsoring a Lutheran breakfast at professional conferences
- Hosting a triennial Zion conference and extending an invitation to ELCA and NALC colleagues
- Board membership on the St. Louis Cluster of Clinical Pastoral Education Centers
- LSA (Lutheran Services in America) Chaplains Network Executive Committee

Deaconess Ministry—Deaconess Grace Rao, Director

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

Over the past three years, ONM has awarded \$175,000 in grants to develop capacity and strengthen internal resources to meet human care needs, to support deaconess internships, and award scholarships for the deaconesses attending annual deaconess gatherings or conferences. The ministry also strives to encourage the deaconess programs at the various centers and institutes of the Synod. ONM was blessed to support two special retreats for deaconesses this past triennium; one hosted by Grace Place Wellness and the other by DOXOLOGY. A special LWML grant of \$40,000 will be used to support various domestic deaconess ministries over the next three years.

The current statistics in the tables below indicate the growth of the ministry over the past four years.

Table 2
Deaconesses (2013–16, by Roster Status)

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016
Active	143	147 ²	162 ³	163
Candidates	24	22	18	22
Non-Candidates	27	36	39	41
Emeritus	41	44	49	53
Total	235	249	268	279

Table 3
Active Deaconesses (2013–16, by Service Context)

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016
Chaplain Institutional	6	4	3	3
District Executive Staff	2	2	2	2
District Other Staff	1	0	1	1
Executive Director	1	1	0	0

Missionary District	0	0	1	1
Missionary Other	1	1	1	1
Missionary Synod	2	2	5	9
Other Special Ministry	8	7	5	4
Professional Staff	1	0	0	0
Principal	0	0	1	1
Recognized Service Organization	19 ¹	15	18	19
Serving Member Congregation	82	90 ²	104 ³	101
Synod College/Seminary Faculty	2	3	3	3
Synod Executive or Staff	6	9	9	10 ⁵
Synod Schools Faculty or Staff	9	9	9 ⁴	10
Teacher	2	2	0	0
Total	142	145	162	165

Notes:

¹One additional deaconess awaiting district papers = “net total” 143 in Table 2 above.

²Two additional deaconesses awaiting district papers = “net total” 147 in Table 2 above.

³One additional deaconess awaiting installation and ⁴one deaconess serving two positions = “net total” 162 in Table 2 above.

⁵Two deaconesses serving two positions = “net total” 163 in Table 2 above.

Table 4
Active Deaconesses (2016, by LCMS District)

District	Total	District	Total
Atlantic	2	Montana	0
California/Nevada/Hawaii	4	Nebraska	5
Pacific Southwest	4	New England	1
Eastern	5	New Jersey	0
English	4	North Dakota	2
Florida-Georgia	12	Northwest	8
Central Illinois	0	Ohio	4
Northern Illinois	19	Oklahoma	3
Southern Illinois	2	Rocky Mountain	0
Indiana	20	South Dakota	0
Iowa East	1	South Eastern	5
Iowa West	1	Southern	1
Kansas	1	Texas	6
Michigan	7	North Wisconsin	1
Mid-South	0	South Wisconsin	10
Minnesota North	3	Wyoming	0
Minnesota South	5	SELC	1
Missouri	26	Grand Total	163

Soldiers and Veterans of the Cross—Rev. Dr. Carlos Hernandez, Director

In economic matters, church workers are no different than those they serve as well as the general population. There are times when the human needs of our church workers exceed their financial resources, especially in times of crisis and illness.

Recently, a worker inflicted with cancer could not begin treatments until he paid the insurance deductible up front. Serving a small congregation with limited resources, he labored in the Lord’s vineyard

as a worker-priest. He could only purchase a low-cost health insurance policy with a high deductible. In order to receive his treatments for the spreading cancer, Soldiers of the Cross, in partnership with the worker's district president, was able to move funds quickly to make sure there was no delay in receiving his critical treatment.

In many ways, as in the account above, Soldiers of the Cross is a lifesaver!

When LCMS workers find themselves in an unexpected financial crisis, the Synod's Soldiers of the Cross fund, made possible by generous donors, engages the worker and his need quickly, compassionately, and confidentially. Only the worker's district president knows of the need, who often partners with Soldiers of the Cross to provide the needed funds. Every need is received and given serious consideration.

In the end, Soldiers of the Cross is an investment in the proclamation of the Gospel. For when a worker is stressed and anxious about a pressing financial need that affects their family, the Gospel does not have free course. Workers receiving assistance from Soldiers of the Cross, as well as the accompanying pastoral conversation and prayer, often comment, "Thank God! Now I can get back to my ministry relieved from the stress of this financial need."

In the last five years, a million dollars has been granted to Synod workers in need. When the districts' amount is included, the funds with which they partner with Soldiers of the Cross to assist one of their workers, the total granted is nearly two million dollars.

The needs are real. And Soldiers of the Cross is poised to continue engaging with workers and their respective district presidents to address financial-crisis needs that might impede the proclamation of the Gospel.

While Concordia Plan Services (CPS) administers Veterans of the Cross, the ONM provides the actual funds and provides pastoral care and case management for recipients. Veterans of the Cross is a pension supplementary program for retirees, widows, and dependent children. In partnership with CPS, ONM provides needed supplementary services, especially identifying candidates, referring them to CPS, and providing follow-up pastoral care and case management.

Disaster Response—Rev. Ross Johnson, Director

During the last three years, Disaster Response and the district disaster coordinators have had the privilege of leading more than 100 different Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) training events throughout various districts. We also lead sectionals at numerous church-worker conferences throughout a number of districts. To assist in this process, we completely revised our training materials. The new manual and accompanying DVD have been distributed to our district disaster response coordinators to lead extra trainings in their respective districts on our behalf. The result has been the ability to train thousands of volunteers each year instead of hundreds.

We also introduced new guides for pastors in the midst of disaster, as well as educators in the midst of disaster. These extra resources give leaders in each congregation the tools if they would need to initiate a response in their community.

Disaster Response also continued to host yearly Disaster Response conferences each fall. More than 100 participants attended each one, and we were blessed with wonderful presenters and great collaboration.

In 2014, we announced a hymn contest with the hopes of finding a new hymn for use in time of disasters. After receiving nearly 130 submissions, we discovered six wonderful hymns that we have made available to congregations in the LCMS to use, free of charge.

The hymns have also been included in a new pastoral resource that we have recently published. *Mercy in Action: Essays on Mercy, Human Care, and Disaster Response* is available from our office,

free of charge, and includes various essays (new and old) that can be a great resource for pastors and congregations.

A huge need that we have seen over the past years has been care for children after a disaster. Because of this, we also developed a Vacation Bible School curriculum that congregations who have been affected may use.

All of these (and more) great resources are currently available in English. At the same time, many of these resources recently have been translated into Spanish for use by congregations with that particular need.

In addition to these resources, we were blessed to have been selected by the LWML national convention to partner with us in supplying more than 20 Disaster Response trailers to partner congregations and districts. This added capacity will allow us to quickly respond across the nation when disaster strikes.

On the response side of our ministry, we have been blessed to have the opportunity to give guidance and capacity after dozens of disasters across the United States. Nearly \$750,000 in direct assistance (grants) was provided to congregations in the Rocky Mountain District after catastrophic flooding.

We also provided similar capacity and guidance after flooding in South Carolina, Florida, and the greater St. Louis area; after tornadoes in Nebraska, South Dakota, Illinois, Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri, and Oklahoma; and after numerous other man-made and natural disasters. When it was deemed necessary, we visited with the disaster sites and met with local congregation leaders to help them develop action plans for a long-term response in their communities.

In all, we granted roughly six million dollars domestically in direct assistance to congregations and districts. These grants helped congregations with gift cards, housing assistance, replacement of essential items for affected families, rebuilding projects, volunteer coordination, and various other uses.

Over the next three years, we intend to continue hosting yearly National Disaster Response conferences on disaster preparedness with the same goal as our previous conferences. We also intended on leading 20 LERT trainings each year, and we expect our district coordinators to lead closer to 80 additional LERT trainings each year. By the end of the next triennium, we hope to have a total of 20,000 trained LCMS volunteers ready to provide assistance via debris cleanup, etc. We also remain available to teach at church-worker conferences and in various other ways at the district level.

We are in the process of writing a devotional guide for victims of disasters and a companion piece for the LCMS's *Pastoral Care Companion* in times of tragedy. Two additional pastoral resources are currently in the works and are scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2016 and 2017, respectively. These resources will help shape our understanding of mercy in the church and will hopefully continue to provide a strong foundation for the basis of our work in time of disaster.

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

Finally, we also intend to continue providing grants to congregations, districts, and recognized service organizations to help build their capacity and effectiveness.

Church and Community Engagement—Rev. Dr. Carlos Hernandez, Director

The Synod's 2013 convention overwhelmingly adopted Res. 2-11 encouraging the use of *Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human*

Needs training process as congregations seek to engage their communities and await the Holy Spirit to touch hearts open to receiving a Gospel witness:

Resolved, That the LCMS Office of National Mission encourage districts and congregations to utilize the *Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs* training process and develop additional training materials to introduce, offer, sustain, and expand the existing efforts to encourage congregations to immerse and root themselves in their immediate neighborhoods for the sake of proclaiming the Gospel.

“Engagement” is at the heart of this initiative. Developed in 1998, *Gospel Seeds* is a four-day training, held monthly at various congregations. Congregational pastors and members are trained in conducting “agency interviews” and “residential interviews” as concrete tools to meet and potentially partner with community agencies (already serving the community) and neighborhood residents in addressing mercy needs in the congregation’s neighborhood. Congregations who use the *Gospel Seeds* methodology to immerse themselves in their community by addressing burning community and neighborhood needs find receptive communities.

Trinity Lutheran Church in Islip, New York, identified heroin use as a critical problem when they conducted the agency and residential interviews. They responded by sponsoring a community forum to address the issue proactively and plan concrete responses and solutions. Six hundred people attended the forum. Likewise, Peace Lutheran in Decatur, Georgia, gained 12 new members within six months of receiving training. It simply works!

Domestic Grants—Barb Hoffman, Manager

Grants are awarded to congregations, districts, recognized service organizations, and other agencies to develop or expand projects that reach out in communities and address unmet human needs while sharing the Gospel message and proclaiming Jesus Christ as the world’s Savior.

Past Triennium Major Accomplishments:

- Awarded 205 domestic grants totaling \$2,993,616 to benefit projects in 29 districts throughout the US. These grants assisted food distribution and gardening programs, after-school or tutoring programs, immigrant assistance and assimilation programs, health and wellness programs, crisis pregnancy care, pro-life education, counseling, chaplaincy care, and church-worker wellness, among others.
- Awarded a total of 132 domestic disaster grants totaling over \$5.79 million for work in 22 districts. The majority of these grants aided LCMS districts and congregations involved in recovery work related to Superstorm Sandy, the floods in Colorado, and severe tornadoes in Moore, Oklahoma, and Pilger, Nebraska. Other disaster grants helped those affected by tornadoes (Alabama, Illinois, and Mississippi); floods (Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, South Carolina, and Virginia); wildfires in Colorado; and other local disasters.
- Provided core budget support to pan-Lutheran partners Lutheran Services in America (LSA, \$406,000) and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS, \$455,000). In addition, seven grants were awarded to LIRS totaling \$200,000 to host an International Lutheran Roundtable on the Exodus of Children and Families from Central America, in order to develop and strengthen connections between Lutherans and community newcomers; lead conversations with service experts and policy leaders to protect unaccompanied, undocumented children; and develop resources for LCMS congregations interested in refugee mentoring, detention visitation, and other immigration issues.

Youth Ministry—Rev. Mark Kiessling, Director

Youth Ministry began the triennium by hosting the 13th LCMS Youth Gathering, *Live Love(d)*, held in San Antonio, Texas, with 22,250 youth and adults participating at the event. An additional 2,500 programmers, planners, and volunteers provided program planning and support. The five-day event provides opportunities to learn more

about the Lutheran faith and current and future vocational roles. The days were filled with workshop sessions, large-group events, servant events, worship, and other learning and fellowship opportunities. The event also showcased Concordia University System institutions, LCMS ministries, recognized service organizations, and other LCMS-related ministries. Planning for the July 16–20, 2016 Gathering in New Orleans, Louisiana, is well underway. A “future search” committee met following the 2013 Gathering and gave input and guidance about the future of the event.

Leadership training for adults included the National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference, July 2015, in New Orleans, with 400 participating. The 2014 Youth Ministry Symposium for youth workers focused on ministry with millennials in their young adult years. The 2016 Youth Ministry Symposium included speakers and discussion about junior confirmation and the new LCMS catechism in process.

Servant events are hosted by LCMS congregations, recognized service organizations, camps, and other social service agencies. More than 4,000 young people served at such events over the triennium. Through servant events, youth engage in acts of mercy and enhance their understanding of vocation and service in the church.

The *Lutheran Young Adult Corps* (previously *Lutheran Youth Corps*) started in 2012, and through staff changes, planning continues to initiate the program in 2017. The program will provide extended service opportunities (3-month and 11-month terms) for young people ages 18–26. Participants will live in houses in close proximity to LCMS Word and Sacrament ministries and in primarily urban cores of US cities. A pilot event happened in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in August 2014.

The Teen Leadership Initiative of Lutheran Youth Fellowship provided training for teens in three areas: 2014—*Teen Bridge Building* focused on nurturing basic leadership skills; 2015—*Teens Stand Strong* focused on youth knowing their rights and opportunities to stand for truth in their world; 2016—*Teens Reaching Teens in the Digital Age* provided outreach training for teens to their peers, especially considering their digital footprint. A basic principle of the Initiative is to provide training which allows for young people to replicate the training for their peers.

Resource development included regular monthly updates of *YouthESource* (www.youthesource.com) online resource, including Bible studies, apologetic talk-sheets, blogs, and other youth and young adult ministry website resources. The office also provides resources through servant events (Bible study and worship materials), Youth Gathering (Bible studies, aids for adult leaders), and Lutheran Youth Fellowship (leadership training materials). Youth Ministry staff also presented on youth ministry topics in a number of venues including LCMS seminaries, Concordia universities, LCMS district youth events, district church-worker events, and LCMS conferences.

School Ministry—Terry Schmidt, Director

During the past triennium, in an effort to better serve more than 250,000 students annually attending 2,111 Lutheran schools, School Ministry has been involved in the management of ongoing programs, developed specialized projects, and improved infrastructure in order to better serve Lutheran schools and enhance their ability to serve students well.

National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) is a process that continues to provide a means of structured self-evaluation and goal setting intent upon improving Lutheran schools. A record number of 697 Lutheran schools are currently accredited. In order to address the changing environment of education, over the past three years NLSA materials have been updated, revised, and improved. Formal partnerships with regional accrediting agencies (WASC, AdvancED, and Middle States) exist to enhance a school’s desire to pursue and obtain

dual accreditation. These partnerships are vital for secondary schools as students matriculate and apply for entrance into state universities. As a result of exceptional programs accredited by NLSA during the past triennium, 20 Lutheran schools (early childhood, elementary, and secondary) were identified as Exemplary Schools. These Exemplary Schools developed 39 “best practice” webinars that were shared with Lutheran educators and administrators nationwide.

The School Leadership Development (SLED) project serves to recruit and prepare the next generation of administrative leaders to serve in Lutheran schools. By 2018, it is anticipated that 40 percent of Lutheran school administrators now serving are expected to retire. The SLED program has been successful in identifying future leaders as evidenced by the number of SLED graduates who are now serving in Lutheran schools. Since the last Synod convention, 77 administrative candidates successfully completed SLED preparation and received an endorsement as candidates for administrative leadership positions in early childhood, elementary, and secondary schools.

Ten LCMS Leadership Coaches were trained, certified, and are serving with the specific purpose of working with educators and leaders. Coaching provides an individual with the opportunity to discuss and explore a personal or professional topic and to develop an action plan with specific goals with a trusted individual who provides accountability for the process. The partnership between the leadership coach and the educator embraces the Christian faith and is committed to the highest ethical and legal standards of the coaching profession.

Lutheran School Consulting Services (LSCS; rebranded from Strengthening Schools and Congregations in 2013) provides diagnostic services designed to strengthen and revitalize Lutheran schools in order that the mission of sharing Christ with children and their families is more effectively accomplished. In the past triennium, 32 schools have been served through diagnostic assessment and the implementation of improvement plans intended to help schools thrive and serve students better.

Of 2,111 Lutheran schools, 1,190 serve children ranging from six weeks of age to five years old. School Ministry serves as an advocate to affirm, equip, and empower leaders of Christ-centered early childhood ministries to impact the lives of children and their families with the love of Jesus and His grace. Districts are encouraged to appoint an LCMS early childhood consultant to work with the education executive to support directors and educators serving in early childhood programs in the district. Training and support for the consultants is conducted through monthly conference calls and an annual conference for professional development in the field of early childhood education. Additionally, a National Lutheran School Accreditation Early Childhood Task Force revised the accreditation self-study document to better meet the needs of early childhood programs. This new document will be piloted during the 2016–17 school year and made available to all centers and programs in the summer of 2017.

The School Ministry staff continues to develop and distribute resources to schools that enhance the teacher’s ability to serve students. Resources include chapel talks, National Lutheran Schools Week materials, and the *School Ministry Mailing* (consisting of 12 monthly articles). Additionally, two manuals have been developed and published: *In His Hands—A Manual for Beginning and Operating Early Childhood Development Programs* and *Eternal Treasures: Teaching Your Child at Home*, to support ministries in churches and schools. Finally, the preparation of materials to support the upcoming celebration of the Reformation and the Rosa Young movie project is underway with resources to be made available for use in Lutheran schools.

In an effort to better serve schools and workers, the School Ministry staff has been actively engaged in improving office procedures and infrastructure. The reconstruction of several critical school

ministry office databases has been undertaken, resulting in the ability to retrieve, analyze, and share reliable data relating to Lutheran schools. Additionally, a process is underway to completely digitalize paper copies of existing records to facilitate document retention and maximize content search.

Collaboratively, School Ministry worked with the Council of Presidents, the Office of Rosters and Statistics, and Information Technologies to complete a project designed to streamline and improve biographical reporting requirements for commissioned ministers. As a result, calling bodies of the LCMS are now able to more effectively and efficiently search for Synod-trained workers to fill ministry needs.

In order to meet the changing needs of LCMS districts, schools, and workers, the historical Lutheran School Portal has been reimagined to a new online resource to facilitate improved communication and resource sharing. Additionally, the School Ministry social media presence has been enhanced to enable regular communication within Lutheran education. Combined, these steps have added another dimension to the online presence of School Ministry in the delivery of content and communication.

All of these efforts (ref. 2013 Res. 3-03A, “To Support, Commend, and Increase Witness, Mercy, and Life Together Ministry of Lutheran Schools”) have been accomplished in close cooperation with LCMS educational executives charged with district, education-related responsibilities. It should be noted that LCMS districts have experienced a significant transition of education executives through retirement and change of position. In order to address these changes, School Ministry conducted an Education Executive Orientation for new and current executives with the intent that this training is offered annually.

Lutheran schools continue to be on the forefront in providing the ability to reach out and serve their communities in unparalleled ways. They operate with the purpose of helping students grow in knowledge skills and in their love of Jesus. In this way, schools have become faith incubators for children, preparing and equipping students for life in this world and for eternity.

Worship—Rev. William Weedon, Director

LCMS Worship exists to strengthen the joy of God’s people as they receive His life-giving gifts in Word and Sacrament through providing worship resources, education, and opportunities for those who serve in worship to grow in excellence in their ministries.

To that end, during the last triennium, Worship offered the Living Liturgy Conference at a number of locations throughout the country (September 2013, Three Forks, Montana; October 2013, Huntington Beach, California; March 2014, Mount Forrest, Ontario; March 2014, Iowa City, Iowa; August 2014, Cumberland, Maryland; October 2014, Plano, Texas; May 2016, Plymouth, Minnesota). Worship also offered two retreats to foster excellence in preaching (August 2014, Lutheran Island, Minnesota; May 2016, Northern Indiana District pastoral conference). Worship provided resources for numerous Synod-sponsored events, including two stewardship conferences, Life Ministry, a campus ministry conference, and two Koinonia Project gatherings (at which Rev. Weedon served as the chaplain).

Ongoing catechesis took place through creative partnership with *Issues, Etc.* through which a 24-part series that walks through the historic liturgy was completed and made available as a free podcast. Other series completed this triennium include Baptism, Marriage, and Ordination. In collaboration with Disaster Response, Worship twice presented plenary presentations (Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne, September 2014, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, October 2015). Worship assisted in the catechesis of new missionaries a number of times. Chaplain Weedon spoke at both the 2014 and 2015 *Making the Case Conference* (Collinsville, Illinois) and was

there awarded in 2015 the Norman Nagel Award. He was a plenary speaker and worship leader at the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians gathering in Atlanta in July 2015, and his presentation was recently published in their periodical, *CrossAccents*.

Worship provided numerous prayers and resources for the Synod's Facebook and social media, as well as for *The Lutheran Witness*. Beginning in August 2015, Worship initiated the hosting of a daily Bible study on KFUO, renamed *Thy Strong Word*. The show walks through a chapter of Scripture each day, and features pastors from around the Synod. It is readily available to be heard anywhere in the world via live-streaming or podcast. Throughout the triennium, *Unwrapping the Gifts* (www.lcms.org/worship/unwrappingthegifts) has provided numerous free resources to the pastors and congregations of the Synod: complete Propers to celebrate a Divine Service remembering the Persecuted Church; hymn suggestions for both the three-year and one-year lectionaries; and various resources to strengthen family worship.

By far the biggest event for Worship was the 2014 Institute on Liturgy, Preaching, and Church Music held at Concordia University, Nebraska, with over 400 attendees. The event was titled *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People* and focused on the way God brings His comforting promises to His people in sermon, service, and song. The attendees gave the conference a very high evaluation with over 98 percent rating it excellent or good. Worship is in process of updating the *Kids in the Divine Service* resource, rapidly wrapping up a hymn-of-the-day Bible study PDF resource, and overseeing the final work on two companion volumes for *Lutheran Service Book*. Meanwhile, we still provide the weekly "LetUsPray" and lectionary summary resources.

Stewardship Ministry—Rev. Heath Curtis, Coordinator

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

It's been an exciting triennium of new ventures in Stewardship Ministry. Right before the 2013 convention, the ONM brought on Rev. Heath R. Curtis as Coordinator for Stewardship and Rev. Nathan Meador as Assistant Coordinator (the previous director, Rev. Wayne Knolhoff, had taken a position at Concordia Seminary, where he continues to be a valued voice for faithful stewardship in the Synod). Both Rev. Curtis and Rev. Meador remain parish pastors, directly connected to Word and Sacrament ministry and to the challenges of funding that ministry in an ever-changing environment. When you contact our office (email stewardship@lcms.org), you will reach Mrs. Robbie Clasen, the Stewardship administrative assistant at the International Center.

We seek to serve the districts of the Synod in four main ways.

- *Resources.* Production and dissemination of stewardship-, vocation-, and sanctification-themed resources. These are all given away for free at our website (lcms.org/stewardship) and range from book-length treatments of active stewardship in the Lutheran parish to newsletter articles and bulletin blurbs. Periodic resources recur weekly and monthly, and permanent resources are updated and added regularly.
- *Teaching and speaking.* Rev. Curtis and Rev. Meador regularly travel to present at pastors conferences, circuit meetings, district conventions, etc. Our main teaching event, the Philipians Workshop, is aimed at the circuit/bi-circuit/regional level, and we have been fielding a steady stream of invitations from the districts for these events. To schedule an event in your district, email us at stewardship@lcms.org. We are currently scheduling these events 9–12 months in advance. We are also

developing a partnership with DOXOLOGY to provide instruction in stewardship at their Insight Conferences.

- *Training leaders.* Some districts have effective and extensive stewardship staff and boards, and some make due with stewardship being one of many tasks taken on by a sole full-time executive. But every district can use more hands on deck. To this end, we hosted two training events for district-approved pastors we helped identify who have agreed to step up into district-level service in the realm of stewardship. Each district will use them differently, but we are confident that this training will be a blessing for whatever role they step into. We are currently refining plans for a three-to-four-year cycle of conferences and training events for future years.
- *Planning for the future.* Our office has hired two demographers to study, evaluate, and report on the demographic makeup and likely future of the Synod. Under the theme of Generational Generosity, our researchers (one from Bethany College and the other from the University of Alabama) have presented us with bracing findings. A summary of their findings has been produced, and we hope to fund other research in the future based on the results of these studies.

Recognized Service Organizations—Deaconess Dorothy Krans, Director

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

We currently have 184 recognized service organizations (RSOs) providing a diversity of services from beginning to end of life. These organizations serve nationally and internationally and extend the mission and ministry of the LCMS by providing acts of mercy, witness, and life together. Since the Synod's 2013 convention, 64 RSOs have received status, of which 22 were new organizations applying for RSO status and 43 were renewing RSOs. These organizations have continued to build up LCMS board membership and continue to look for stronger relationships with our LCMS congregations. Twenty-nine RSOs were terminated, denied, or were asked to withdraw their applications for RSO status. The ONM strives to promote the services and programs of the RSOs, connect them with the other entities in ONM, and network LCMS congregations, districts, and auxiliaries to connect RSOs with resources. Small grants are given as scholarships to the CEOs to attend Lutheran conferences which enable them to strengthen their board governance, organizational structure, and leadership skills. Grants are also given to provide devotional material and offer assistance with programs.

Association school RSOs were moved from the area of School Ministry to sit under the RSO department in October 2013. There are 152 association schools that hold RSO status. Thirty association schools had their RSO status renewed, one new school association was granted RSO status, and one independent LCMS school received RSO status.

As faith-based organizations, RSOs continue to face challenges with changes in state and federal law that infringe upon their religious rights of freedom. The Supreme Court decision regarding the legalization of same-sex marriage has and will continue to challenge how our organizations live out our doctrinal belief in the area of adoption and foster care. RSOs working in the area of aging services are also concerned regarding the proposed laws dealing with the legalization of self-assisted suicide and euthanasia.

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

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL MISSION

Global Reports by Region

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

As I prepare this regional report for West Africa, I must tell you honestly that I last set foot in the region back in 2003 as I passed through a throng of 5,000 protestors at the Abidjan airport to board an Air France flight packed with 573 souls, the last of five missionary households to be evacuated due to the outbreak of civil war in Côte d'Ivoire. In the larger context of that time, this evacuation sort of worked out in a strange way for the Synod as the officials of the Board for Mission Services were trying to figure out which 30 or so missionary households to send home due to budgetary constraints.

As I boarded that plane and said a prayer for the region and the church there, I thought to myself that we're going to have a "Biafran War" situation all over again, only this time for all the young mission churches in West Africa. You see, back in 1967, civil war broke out in Nigeria, forcing the evacuation of all Synod missionaries. As those sent men and women boarded the plane, they surely were thinking, "How can this baby church survive without our help?" When they were finally able to return four long years later, they had their answer—not only had the church there survived, but, purely by God's grace, it had grown stronger and more independent of outside aid.

To my knowledge, that new "Biafran War orphaned" status has lingered to varying degrees for decades with regard to the churches in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. It has not been nearly as long for the churches of Ghana, Togo, and Nigeria. The common factor in all cases is that, by God's grace, *all* have survived. A few might even be said to be thriving.

Still, the churches in the region, in some cases, have lost thousands of sheep since I left in 2003 because of this orphaned status and because often missionaries, in their commendable eagerness to advance God's kingdom, gathered way too many sheep before paying enough attention to preparing shepherds to care for them, protect them, and keep them in the fold. I must note that this winnowing process is not always a bad thing because it is also purifies—but it cannot be allowed to continue. Meanwhile, Satan is actively trying to destroy the church there through the fourfold existential threat of traditional religion, sects and cults, militant Islam, and false teaching within the church itself. At this time, the "prosperity gospel" especially is a very seductive alternative to the truth of the Gospel in this mostly impoverished environment, and Pentecostalism also remains a great threat.

So, the principal area where the West African church continues to need help is in the area of theological education and the formation of pastors. This is a true gift from God after all these years because, just as President Harrison has pointed out so eloquently and so often, theological education and the formation of pastors has always been precisely the sweet spot of the LCMS—the gift we are uniquely positioned to give the world.

Since the resolution of the 2013 Synod convention to double the number of foreign missionaries in the next triennium, the population of the West African diaspora of Synod missionaries has increased quickly from one or two to a dozen households, including my own, almost all directly involved in theological education.

We currently have a renewed missionary presence in two Anglophone (English-speaking) countries. In Ghana, Rev. David and Joyce Erber (who have served in West Africa for some 30 years), Rev. Steven and Cynthia Schumacher, Rev. Doug and Angie Thompson, Rev. Mark and Susan Moss, and Rev. Ryan and Emily McDermott are all tasked to live in Accra, the coastal capital, and help in different ways at the Lutheran Theological Seminary there, which just dedicated a new building in 2014. Rev. McDermott will be focusing especially on deaf ministry, with some assistance from Rev.

Schumacher. Cynthia Schumacher, meanwhile, is teaching in a local Lutheran school. Rounding out the current Ghana team, Rev. Dale and Suzanne Kaster are in the northern town of Tamale where Rev. Kaster is currently conducting seminary courses leading to ordination in the northern regions. In Nigeria, Rev. Richard Wokoma, a national pastor, is serving the church there as a called LCMS missionary.

We also have a renewed missionary presence in the francophone (French-speaking) nation of Togo. Rev. Jacob Gaugert, Rev. Micah and Robin Wildauer, and Valerie Stonebreaker are tasked to live in the small northern town of Dapaong and help in different ways with the development of the Centre Luthérien d'Etudes Théologiques (CLET), established in 1997. Pastors Gaugert and Wildauer will be teaching at the Center, while Miss Stonebreaker looks toward possibly helping start a local Lutheran school. The impact of this little seminary in this little town in this little country is huge! All five of the francophone mission churches, plus two more from Central Africa, have sent men for training toward ordination at the CLET. Rounding out the francophone team at present, Rev. Fred Reinhardt, who has served in Africa for nearly two decades, is based in Brazzaville, Congo, and serves as Area Facilitator for Central Africa.

There are also seminaries in Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone that want our help, and we are looking hard at deploying missionaries to those places to meet that need. Those situations are currently being evaluated due to security concerns. In fact, the ground has shifted dramatically throughout the region with regard to security in recent years. Our window of opportunity may be short in some areas for effective Gospel ministry. This definitely adds another layer of urgency to the task!

While our focus remains on theological education, in this life together in Christ, we have not forgotten that we are also called to works of mercy, especially in a part of the world historically so beset by physical suffering. This is where my wife, Stephanie Schulte, will contribute to the team. She will be undertaking the pioneering work of developing and implementing a strategy to deploy MMT (Mercy Medical Teams) where and when they are needed most in the newly created position of Regional Mercy Medical Ministry Coordinator.

All of this LCMS missionary work is just getting off the ground again and, as great as the 2013 Res. 1-11 has been for West African mission work, the widely held opinion of the missionaries is that it is time to slow down just a little bit. It can often take as many as three years of language and cultural acquisition in this environment before a missionary is ready to do more good than harm. And right now, all but four of our missionary households are completely new to the mission field. It is kind of organized chaos in West Africa right now as things have progressed so quickly in the last three years. But I think that is right where God wants His Church and His workers at all times so that we remain wholly dependent upon Him!

I thank the Lord of the Church that He has seen fit to allow me to once again be part of such a major manifestation of His grace in these end times. May Christ continue to grant each of us His grace and His passion for mission as we continue to do together this worldwide work of preparing the way for Christ's triumphant return! We work while it is yet daylight! Come, Lord Jesus!

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

The LCMS collaboratively supports and encourages God's elect in Lutheran churches or Lutheran mission areas across Eastern and Southern Africa in church planting, pastoral education and formation, lay leader training, human care projects and grants, and Lutheran schools, such that the clear proclamation of the Gospel may go forth in existing and new congregations.

The Eastern and Southern Africa Area includes the following church bodies in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS:

- Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa
- Lutheran Church in Southern Africa
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK)

The area includes the following theologically compatible church bodies currently pursuing fellowship talks with the LCMS:

- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sudan/South Sudan
- Lutheran Church of Sudan
- Lutheran Church of East Africa (Tanzania and Kenya)
- Ethiopian Evangelical Lutheran Church
- Confessional Lutheran Church—Malawi Synod

The area includes the following theologically compatible church bodies not currently pursuing fellowship talks with the LCMS:

- Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy
- Lutheran Church of Uganda
- Igreja Luterana da Concórdia em Moçambique

The area includes the following church bodies with whom the LCMS has a current relationship but which are not yet known to fit into one of the above categories:

- Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT)
- Lutheran Church of Rwanda
- Reformed Lutheran Church of Rwanda
- St. Peter's Confessional Lutheran Church (South Africa)
- Lutheran Evangelical Church in Africa (Zambia)

Following is an analysis of current key activities and goals over the next triennium in Eastern and Southern Africa area, arranged according to the Synod's current six mission priorities:

1. *Plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches.*

Through OIM, the LCMS currently provides funding, missionaries, or other material support for the following:

- The Mission Training Center program in the South East of Lake Victoria Diocese of the ELCT, which includes the expectation that program participants plant a new congregation before graduation from the program (funding)
- A local missionary from the ELCK to minister on periodic visits to Kakuma Refugee Camp (funding)
- Motorcycle projects in a number of countries to provide local pastors the means to visit congregations and mission areas (funding)
- Guest preaching, administration of Holy Communion, confirmation, and Baptism in the course of visits (missionaries)

In the next triennium, OIM hopes to additionally recruit new missionaries or provide material support to the following:

- Plant one EECMY-LCMS English-speaking congregation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (missionary)
- Plant one ELCK English-speaking congregation in Karen, Kenya (missionary)
- Plant churches and preaching stations in Lodwar, Kenya (funding and missionary)
- Start Mission Training Centers in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Malawi (missionary and funding)

2. *Support and expand theological education.*

Through OIM, the LCMS currently provides funding, missionaries, or other material support for the following:

- Mekane Yesus Seminary in Ethiopia (missionaries)
- Matongo Lutheran Theological College in Kenya (missionaries and funding)
- Lutheran Theological Seminary in South Africa (funding)
- Tabor Evangelical College in Hawassa, Ethiopia (funding)
- Nekemte Christian Education College in Ethiopia (funding)
- St. Peter Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tanzania (funding)

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

- The Lutheran Theological Seminary in Uganda (missionaries and funding)

- St. Peter Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tanzania (addition of missionaries)
- One regional seminary in Ethiopia (addition of missionaries)

3. *Perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministries.*

Through OIM, the LCMS currently provides funding, missionaries, or other material support for the following:

- Mercy Medical Teams in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Madagascar (missionary)
- An area nurse educator (missionary)
- Church construction matching grants including tin roofs in Madagascar, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Uganda, and Ethiopia (funding)
- Water projects in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Malawi (funding)
- Agricultural Consultancy in Malawi and Kenya (volunteer missionary)
- Scholarships to professional governance-training organizations (funding)

In the next triennium, OIM hopes to additionally recruit missionaries or provide funding to do the following:

- Support church bodies developing their office of deaconess (missionary).
- Work in church-sponsored medical clinics, centers, and hospitals in Madagascar, Tanzania, and Kenya (missionary).

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

Through OIM, the LCMS currently provides the following:

- Newly deploying missionaries to participate in online missionary training provided by Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (funding)
- On-field missionaries to participate in a continuing education program provided by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (funding)
- Participate in partner meetings in Ethiopia and Uganda (missionary)
- Referrals to Orphan Grain Train in Ethiopia and Tanzania

In the next triennium, OIM hopes to additionally:

- Encourage and participate in partner meetings in additional countries (missionary)

5. *Promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers.*

Through OIM, the LCMS currently provides the following:

- An area visitor (pastoral counselor) to provide individual spiritual care and counseling to each called missionary family unit with a minimum of contact every two weeks and in-person visits to deployed staff three days per quarter
- Team placement of all missionaries with language-proficiency requirements
- Access to the Sacraments for teams not placed into contexts where there is a fellowship partner
- Annual goal-setting and reviews
- All-area continuing education weekend twice per year (three-day, four-night)
- Annual four-day, five-night retreat focused on fellowship, rejuvenation, worship, counseling, and spiritual care (country, all-area, or all-Africa)
- Six-month sabbaticals to missionaries in their seventh year of service
- Facilitation of Luther Academy, Pastoral Leadership Institute International, short-term teams, volunteers, and grants to local church bodies for the ongoing care and development of their workers

In the next triennium, OIM hopes to additionally provide the following:

- A council of elders formed from retired missionaries to provide feedback, guidance, and historical background

6. *Enhance early childhood, elementary and secondary education, and youth ministry.*

Through OIM, the LCMS currently provides funding, missionaries, or other material support for the following:

- Christ's Care for Children sponsoring 150 children in four sites in Kenya (missionary and funding)
- Project24 building school boarding sites in Kenya (funding)

- Karama Academy (primary school)—Kibera, Kenya (missionary)
- Church workers' children's scholarship fund in South Africa (funding)

In the next triennium, OIM hopes to additionally recruit missionaries or provide funding to the following:

- Lodwar Mission Station primary school in Kenya (funding)

The Eastern and Southern Africa Area strives to support the church bodies with whom we have relationships, re-establish historic ties that were not maintained through personnel transitions, and establish new relationships with emerging churches. Individuals, congregations, districts, RSOs, and entities of the LCMS who are operating independently can be a God-glorifying complement to the work of the LCMS as a Synod through OIM. Unfortunately, those same independent mission efforts can also support heterodox groups or foster conflict within the autonomous church bodies with whom we have a relationship and thus act at odds to our synodwide endeavors. This area calls for a unification and collaboration between independent efforts and the work the Synod has tasked OIM to do or a clarification of the intended role of OIM in missions abroad.

This area is in a time of rebuilding. A significant number of missionaries have been called to this field in the last triennium who are currently deploying. Their impact among our partners is not yet felt as many new missionaries are still in the partner-building phase of missionary service and those who have deployed are largely engaged in language study. The impact of their service will manifest in the coming triennium, although their mere promise and presence on the field is a great encouragement to the church bodies with whom we work. There are also challenges in staff expansion primarily because there is no parallel budget increase to provide program dollars for the direct work or complementary projects that enhance the effectiveness of the missionary. The Eastern and Southern Africa Area is a point at which the effectiveness of additional missionaries is compromised because material support is not made available for their work. Despite this, we have scores of open opportunities we are eager to fill, trusting that provision will be made by the church as God's harvest workers arrive on the field.

Asia Region—(Regional Director position currently vacant)

This region's report is submitted by Mr. Darin Storkson, former Senior Regional Director for Asia, who recently accepted an appointment to serve in LCMS Church Relations.

The largest region of international mission, Asia, encompasses three of the world's four largest populations: China, India, and Indonesia. Over three billion people inhabit the region. Opportunities abound to proclaim the Gospel of Christ so the Holy Spirit may call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify His saints.

The last triennium brought numerous blessings to the region. The regional staff capacity increased significantly with the addition of a business manager to oversee business affairs throughout the region. The first regional chaplain was recruited and deployed to the field to enhance our capacity to provide for the spiritual needs of our missionaries. The position has been very well received and is being implemented in other regions as well. A missionary care coordinator has also been appointed, further increasing missionary care. Missionary care is at an all-time high.

Even though the triennium began with five vacant area director positions, four of the positions have been filled. Finally, a communications director was recruited and deployed as well.

In addition to regional staff, a number of missionaries also accepted calls and have either deployed or are preparing to deploy, including theological educators in Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and Sri Lanka.

As we work to implement the six mission emphases of the OIM mission strategy, we do so by supporting our partner churches in a

number of ways. We are implementing these emphases through the five strategies listed below:

- Church Planting: A major strategy in North/South Asia and Bangladesh
- Supporting Existing Church Partnerships: A major strategy in Thailand, Philippines, Taiwan, India, Sri Lanka, and Papua New Guinea
- Theological Education: A major strategy in Cambodia, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong
- Mercy Work: A strategy used across the entire region as needed
- Lutheran Education: A strategy in China, Hong Kong, Japan, and Papua New Guinea

Opportunities

Great progress has been made with the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC), which is aggressively working to root out simony and corruption in the church by placing their assets under better management. They have asked for the continued support and assistance of the LCMS in this task. The LCMS has also increased support for the seminary in Nagercoil to historic levels. We look forward to a renewed relationship with the IELC.

Numerous opportunities for church planting have risen in Asia. Since the last triennium was spent finding and deploying regional staff, we have increased capacity to support missionaries who work with partner churches in church planting. These include opportunities to partner with Lutheran church bodies in Bangladesh and Burma.

Opportunities to plant churches in regions unfavorable to the Gospel have also arisen, and we have worked to capitalize on them.

We continue to receive requests to support theological education throughout the region, especially in Cambodia, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong.

In celebration of the upcoming Reformation anniversary, we have been supporting the Lutheran Church—Hong Kong Synod in translating the works of Martin Luther into Chinese.

At the request of the Lutheran Church—Hong Kong Synod, the regional chaplain started Immanuel Lutheran Church, Hong Kong, an English-speaking congregation of the LCHKS that serves missionary staff and expatriates.

As other international church organizations continue to encourage unscriptural mores and teachings, Lutheran church bodies across the region have begun to seek the partnership and support of the LCMS. This trend will only continue in the upcoming years. We have a great opportunity to guide potential church bodies throughout the region.

Challenges

While numerous projects are taking place across the region, missionary staff members on the ground are the most important blessings we have. Our missionaries not only direct the projects throughout the region, but through their proclamation of Word and distribution of the Sacraments, the Holy Spirit extends His Church. The abundance of opportunities in the face of continued missionary shortages is the greatest challenge in the region. Please continue to pray and seek for means to find, fund, and deploy missionaries to Asia.

More missionaries also means increased logistical obligations. This has been partially mitigated by the appointment of a missionary care coordinator in the field, yet increased missionary deployment will continue to add to these obligations. We give thanks for God's gifts in the last triennium, and we also ask for you to continue to pray to the Lord of the harvest, that He continue to send and provide support for workers in the Asian mission field.

There has never been a better time to be involved in confessional Lutheran ministry in Asia. Our existing sister churches desire our active engagement and partnership in joint Lutheran ministry. Lutheran World Federation member church bodies that are not in fellowship with the LCMS are hungry for scriptural, confessional teaching and fellowship. The last triennium has brought fellowship requests from church bodies in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Burma, and

the Himalayas. There will be more to come as Asian church bodies decide to leave the LWF. The LCMS can and should continue to position itself to be a friend to such church bodies. Our greatest asset is our confessional teaching, which is exactly what these partners want. Let us unite with and behind our international partners, supporting them with our prayers, teaching, and resources. God's Word will not return void. Amen.

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

Latin America Caribbean (LAC) Region Strategy Statement:

By the power of the Spirit, work in pastoral formation, strengthen the pastorate, and plant Lutheran missions that lead to Lutheran churches which are merciful and give witness to Christ through Word and Sacrament.

The strategic plan for LAC is organized around the six priorities for the work of the LCMS.

1. Plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches.

Strategic Direction: Enable church planting by supporting church planting efforts of national church bodies and by directly engaging in church planting activities through deployed missionaries (NSM and Alliance).

LAC will support direct church planting activities in Belize, Caymans, Chile, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, and Uruguay. LAC indirectly supports church planting in Colombia, Paraguay, and Jamaica.

Positive Impact of Doubling the Number of Missionaries: LAC missionaries have grown from six missionaries (five years ago) to 31 career, three Alliance, and five GEO missionaries (20 spouses, 46 children, and missionaries account for a total of 104 people who are supported).

The encouragement by the Synod to double the number of missionaries has had a positive impact in allowing LAC to do the following:

- To expand church planting from three to ten countries
- To provide professors to raise up an indigenous clergy in our new church plants and sister churches
- The LCMS has supported and grown in her support of Network Support Missionaries.
- Districts, RSOs, and congregations directly partner with LAC in church planting in seven countries with three more to be added this year.
- Our capacity to show mercy has grown as we place mercy houses alongside our churches.

Adding missionaries means more monies are needed for projects. This need has been met by creating partnerships ("FOROs"—Forums) which allow us to support continued and expanded work. These FOROs exist in seven countries and an additional three planned in 2016.

- Create a "circle of support and platform" through FOROs around each church plant. Each FORO:
 - Engages LCMS districts to provide financial support and human resources (seven currently engaged)
 - Engages congregations and short-term teams
 - RSOs are engaged to bring resources and capacity to the work.
 - Lutheran Hour Ministries will be engaged to provide media and other support.

Future Growth: Working in these fields alone, without further expansion to new fields, requires an additional 45 missionaries, lay and ordained. A projected 15 missionaries per year for the next three years are needed to fulfill these needs.

This will allow us to do the following:

- Have multiple Lutheran churches planted and establish mercy houses that serve people in their body
- Strengthen sister churches in their witness of Christ and Him crucified
- Strengthen and establish new Lutheran schools
- Provide professors for partner churches

Recommendations:

- Challenge the LCMS to support the doubling of missionaries again so that the preaching of the Word might be furthered and Christ's gifts offered in ever more places.
- Challenge the LCMS to affirm and support the OIM as the only sending arm of the LCMS.
- Celebrate that one of our daughter churches, IELB-Brazil, has reached across the ocean and planted her first foreign church in Angola, Africa, by ordaining her first pastors in July 2015.
- Give thanks that in three years, the Lord of the Church has permitted us to more than double the number of LAC missionaries and that He has moved the LCMS to support this effort.
- Give thanks for the faithfulness of families of the LCMS who have been called and commit to pray and support them in our efforts throughout the world.

2. Support and expand theological education.

Strategic Direction: Regional seminaries need to be started or capacity built to train pastors to plant churches and to properly serve existing congregations. A clear route to ordination needs to be articulated in the LAC region in order to provide indigenous pastors for the planting and for serving congregations.

Positive Impact of LAC Support of Seminaries: Currently, 135 Spanish-speaking pastors serve throughout Latin America. Some 750 Brazilian pastors serve in Brazil. With enrollment in Concordia Seminary Argentina at 65, the opportunity exists to double the number of pastors in our sister churches in Latin America in the next five years. A waiting list of 15 students exists for admitting men to residential education. LAC supports 20 scholarships and one professor at the seminary. She provides five missionary pastors to be theological mentors to the online FPH pastoral program as well.

For the first time in our Lutheran history, pastoral formation through seminaries and online is offered throughout the entirety of LAC. This means that we are providing pastors to plant new churches and those to tell the next generation.

Seminaries:

- Argentina—currently serving Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia, Guatemala, Peru, Spain, Paraguay, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Venezuela. She has a total of 35 men in residence (at capacity) and an additional 30 studying online in her joint FPH certificate program with CTSFW.
- Brazil—serving Brazil and Angola in Africa (building \$300,000 facility in Angola through own funding and ordained first class 2015) and has 100+ men in residence program.
- Nicaragua—(Lutheran Church—Canada)—serving Honduras, Costa Rica. OIM Missionary Rev. Ed and Deaconess Cherie Auger supervise the mission as per three-way protocol document.
- Dominican Republic—Slated to open with pastoral formation in 2017. Currently a deaconate seminary.

Continued and Future Impact by LAC on our partner churches:

- Luther Academy—Continuing Education for the Ministerium—LAC has provided financial support for Luther Academy in the past five years and provided more than 50 courses in five countries. She has also had 10 international theological conferences.
- VDMA—provide all pastors, seminarians, and deaconesses with access to Lutheran theology (books etc.) through online technology. Five Lutheran books per year for five years.
- Hymnal Project—due to be released in 2017.
- Luther Academy Funding—emphasis on liturgy in 2016 with classes in *Pastoral Care Companion* (pastoral practice), *Heaven on Earth* (theology of worship), and hymnal (congregational worship).

Recommendations:

- That the LCMS give thanks to the Lord for Concordia Seminary Argentina that provides pastors for 14 countries and is at capacity.
- That the LCMS give support for the establishing of a new seminary in the Dominican Republic to meet the waiting list of students who want residential education.

- That the LCMS give thanks for both North American seminaries for their critical role in preparing pastors and giving higher degrees to men from partner churches and give more monies to the Global Seminary Initiative to increase the number of students.

3. *Perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministries.*

Strategic Direction: All church planting is to be accompanied by institutional works of mercy. The following activities support this strategic direction.

Current and Future Impact:

- Initiate mercy institutions alongside Word and Sacrament church plants. This means establishing, promoting, and sustaining any institution involving human care for that community.
- Initiate five-year deaconess program. Teach two courses per year in five sister churches for a total of 10 years (launches in May 2016).
- Mercy/Life/Disaster Response conferences. The region will promote annual Latin American Mercy conferences.
- Disaster response preparedness. Training in the theology and practice; prepare and train leaders.

Recommendation:

- That the LCMS remain committed to serving people in body and spirit so that the whole person might be served as our Lord Jesus has done in rising in body and soul and promises a resurrection of body and soul.

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

Strategic Direction: The LAC Region will partner with national churches, seminaries, RSOs, and other groups to implement the strategies described in this plan. Please see mission priorities 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 to see our mutual collaboration.

Present Impact: Create FOROs—Each area will have a FORO/FORUM to provide theological education, offer accountability, and raise financial and human resource support for the work in the area.

Future Impact: Vocational Bible institute will be created. This Bible institute will be vocational in nature rather than preparing people for a career in church work (launch in 2017).

Recommendation: Give thanks for our faithful partner churches who give witness in a variety of contexts and environments and seek to do that faithfully through the preaching of the Gospel.

5. *Promote and nurture the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers.*

Strategic Direction: LAC Region will institutionalize this kind of care for its staff and will work to offer the same kind of care to partners in the region.

Monastery Approach: The monastery is for worship, rest, study, and fellowship for missionaries and sister church presidents, professors, etc. As such, we have identified the following—

Current and Future Impact:

- Regional missionary retreats—Yearly, bring all together for study of the Word of God, time of worship, and fellowship.
- Pastoral visitors—Primary task of those in supervision of missionaries is pastoral care/theological oversight of missionaries and mission. Three times a year have reading of theology aimed at studying theological life of the mission and addressing issues that need attention.
- Develop mission leadership—Continue to use CTSFW certificate program (six courses).
- Language and cultural acquisition plan and electronic manual.
- Provide mentorship—weekly mentorship for new missionaries.

6. *Enhance early childhood, elementary and secondary education, and youth ministry.*

Strategic Direction: Supporting and strengthening education may be included in the mercy work associated with church planting and strengthening existing congregations.

- Assist Uruguay in establishing her university. This is to be the first Spanish-speaking Lutheran university. Its capacity will be 12,000 students.
- Support Lutheran school teachers to be connected with Lutheran schools throughout Latin America for professional development.
- Connect Concordia Lutheran schools in the US to Latin American Lutheran schools.

Recommendation: Pray for the founding of this Lutheran university in a country in which more than 40 percent of people are self-professed atheists.

Eurasia Region—Rev. James Krikava, Regional Director

Since assuming the position of Regional Director on Nov. 10, 2015, the Regional Business Manager and I have been conducting visitations to our areas in order to assess strengths and weaknesses as we move forward in ways consistent with the Gospel of Christ and conducive to our Lord's command to His Church to go and make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching (Matthew 28:19–20). This teaching reflects the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, collected in the Lutheran Book of Concord, a correct explanation of the doctrines of Holy Scripture dealt with therein. In this way, our Lutheran identity will be expressed in word and deed in all that our missionaries undertake in their various fields.

Our work can be categorized as follows—

- Direct mission work by LCMS pastors and workers on the ground.
 - Ordained pastors doing the work of the preaching office in church planting and nurturing new churches to a mature Lutheran faith.
 - GEO missionaries and others working in the areas of mercy and witness in support of and connected with church planting and/or already established church bodies where indigenous pastors have assumed the work of the preaching office.
- Support of direct mission work by LCMS pastors, educators, and other personnel needed to assist mission upstarts, mission church partners, and other emerging partners in the Gospel.
 - Area chaplaincy(ies) to minister to GEO workers and others around them in places where Lutheran pastoral care is not available from partner churches due to language barriers or other circumstances.
 - COMM to cover and promote work and activities in the region for regional awareness among our workers and for Synod awareness of our regional missions.
 - Theological education and continuing education within mission upstarts, new Lutheran church bodies, emerging Lutheran churches, and established partner Lutheran churches where such education is desired and requested.

Visitations: Since November 2015, we have visited—

- Sister Lutheran churches in the Baltic countries of Latvia and Lithuania, meeting with church officials and laity
- Scandinavia—Attended a Northern Europe Luther Academy (NELA) conference in Bergen, Norway, meeting pastors and laity of our sister church in Norway, as well as confessional Lutherans from Sweden, Finland, and Denmark
- Russia—Attended the convention of the Ev. Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia (ELCIR), where we have had missionaries in the past and still support some of the pastoral work and humanitarian projects there. Representatives from the Lutheran Church in Novosibirsk also were in attendance, giving us an opportunity to hear about the church and seminary there, which has long been supported by the LCMS.
- Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan—Visited both countries twice. All of our missionaries except one have left these two fields now served by indigenous pastors. The situation in both countries has become complicated due to two revolutions and the domination of Islamic governments.
- Mongolia—The last of our missionaries to leave Kazakhstan was actually expelled from the country, in part because of his mission work in the Kazakh language. The Lutheran Church of Kazakhstan works in Russian, an official language of the country. While mission work in

Russian is tolerated, the use of Kazakh for mission work is seen as an affront to Islam. The work in Kazakh has moved to Mongolia where Kazakhs are a large minority.

- Central Europe—We have GEO missionaries in Hungary, Slovakia, and Silesia. They are all working in situations where churches of our fellowship are unavailable and are now being ministered to by an area chaplain. In addition, we have made new contacts with confessional Lutherans from Poland and Romania through some of our Lutheran theological conferences in the area. In the Czech Republic, in addition to my RD duties, I am currently serving as the vacancy pastor for St. Michael's Lutheran Congregation in Prague.
- Western Europe—While we have a number of projects in this area, our biggest project in Western Europe is our recent assistance with the refugee project in cooperation with SELK in Germany. We have met with the bishop of SELK and several of his pastors involved in refugee outreach. Their work is exemplary, and the Lord has blessed their efforts. We are currently helping them in a financial way, but more help is needed, and, at their request, we are preparing our men to join them in the effort. While the Islamic homelands of the refugees are often closed to us, through the flight of these refugees, a door is opening to preach the Gospel to multitudes from these same countries. The potential for evangelism among them no doubt will be expanded for years to come.

Future Plans: The Synod mandate to double the number of career missionaries (2013 Res. 1-11) is having a salutary effect in Eurasia. First, interest in foreign missions is on the rise and the level of applicants is encouraging. This is allowing us to make plans for specific work in the region. Plans for the future include the following:

- Providing theological educators for requesting church partners (Baltics, Russia, Central Asia)
- Providing a regional chaplaincy, not only for GEOs but for LCMS military personnel and communities around military bases where LCMS military chaplains have been pulled out due to US downsizing in Europe
- Starting a mission in Romania. Contact has been made with a few confessional Lutherans in Bucharest who would like our assistance in forming a Romanian Lutheran Church using the Romanian language
- Establishing one or more preaching stations in the Czech Republic
- Exploring possibilities with contacts in Poland where Lutherans are now being pressured by the LWF to ordain women pastor and embrace the homosexual agenda
- Having a full-time communications director to work in media-based ministry, cover regional events, and communicate them to the region and our donors

Regional Challenges: Thus far, our regional infrastructure and budget have been able to keep up with increases in missionaries on the field. I believe this will continue to be the case because of the restructuring we are currently involved in.

- Restructuring: The LCMS established a number of area NGOs in Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Germany (for work in Turkey) for the support of LCMS missionaries in these places. The offices for these NGOs has been quite expensive. Now that LCMS missionaries have turned the work over to indigenous churches and no longer need such institutions as church bodies have been established, the new restructuring will allow us to close many of these institutions and work directly with legal church bodies and entities. With the money we will save by this, we will be able to budget funds for new mission work in the region.
- Cooperating with the Office of Church Relations (OCR) and the Global Seminary Initiative (GSI). It is important to note that OIM's Eurasia work in the refugee work in Germany and theological education throughout the region is closely tied to OCR and GSI. Plans must be coordinated between OIM and OCR and GSI. This requires good communication and coordination between the agencies so that we are all on the same page. We are thankful for this cooperation.

In Summary: The work of OIM Eurasia is a labor of love as is the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world. Please pray for our efforts as we move forward in our region. There is still much to be done and by the grace of God we will continue to press on with the work we have been given to do.

Reports by Program Ministries

Deaconess Ministry—Deaconess Grace Rao, Director

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

The Director of Deaconess Ministry engages and informs the Synod's districts, congregations, and partner church bodies of the LCMS's work of mercy, thus increasing the awareness of diaconal needs and deaconess ministry of LCMS mercy programs. Also, the position serves as a catalyst in identifying, directing, and supporting educational and diaconal needs internationally. The ministry promotes deaconesses through different forms of media and speaking engagements. Over the past decade and a half, OIM Mercy Operations has awarded \$400,000 in grants to enhance deaconess programs, supporting scholarships and women's seminars. Additional scholarships have been provided for international deaconesses to take part in theological conferences as well.

Past Triennium Major Accomplishments:

- The highlight of 2015 was the commissioning of the first 10 deaconesses for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia in the history of the church.
- Exciting and good news is that the Lutheran Church of Philippines decided introducing full-time deaconess studies at their Lutheran Theological Seminary in Baguio City in June 2015. Glory be to God! Prior to this, an advanced deaconess program started in 2012.
- We initiated contact in the areas of international outreach to partner churches with Lithuania and Nigeria and to non-partner churches of Silesian Lutheran Church, Czech Republic, and Madagascar organizing women's seminar to understand the “Role of Women in the Church,” which will pave the way to consider implementing deaconess program.
- By God's grace, Lithuania and Nigeria have considered incepting the deaconess program in building up the ministry, thereby encouraging the women of the church to serve the Lord in various vocations, and in particular as a deaconess. The studies will commence in April 2016 and August 2016.
- Dr. Albert Collver established relationship with the Silesian Lutheran Church of Augsburg convention in Cesky Tesin, and Silesian Diakonia in Czech Republic. The Diakonia leader Dr. Mrs. Zuzana Filipkova invited us to speak at their “spiritual conference” and “women's seminar” in December 2014. Later, the relationships have strengthened that we were invited to participate at their 25th anniversary celebrations in October 2015. Also, they are translating the book *Christ Have Mercy*, authored by Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, for their pastors, spiritual leaders, and lay leaders. The LCMS funded the project.
- A big thank-you to LWML for their continued support and encouragement toward deaconess ministry. OIM received a grant of \$50,000.
- We continue to support teaching deaconess studies in 11 countries—India, Indonesia, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines, and South Africa.
- Financial assistance was granted for the training of five Tanzanian deaconesses in Kenya to study at ELCK seminary.

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

New Triennium Major Goals:

- Plans are in progress to assist partner churches in Japan and Korea to consider training of women in leadership roles especially as deaconesses.
- Plans are in progress to help, assist, and build the deaconess program in Ethiopia. Also, we would like to visit Tanzania to see their deaconess mother house.
- We plan to continue visiting once a year the SELK deaconess mother house in Gubin, Germany, and to continue to assist with the women refugees where SELK congregations are engaged.
- We plan to continue to engage and inform the districts and congregations by promoting, identifying, and advocating the diaconal needs with special relevance to deaconess ministry.
- We continue to build relationships with partner churches to assist, coordinate, and direct their deaconess studies by coordinating with regional directors and area directors of OIM, theological educators, and the Director and Assistant Director of Church Relations, focusing on Lutheran doctrine, confessions, and other diaconal needs.
- Work is in progress for bringing out a *Deaconess Ministry* DVD, coordinating with all three deaconess programs of the LCMS.

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

Disaster Response—Rev. Ross Johnson, Director

Past Triennium Major Accomplishments:

Training and preparedness (including theological education)—

- During the last years, we had the privilege of leading several different conferences throughout the various regions on Disaster Preparedness. The intent has been to raise up leaders in our partner churches and give guidance to our missionaries on the ground as it relates to mercy work in the church in general and Disaster Response in particular. Trainings were held in Santiago, Chile (12+ partner churches across Latin America were represented), Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Argentina, and Madagascar.
- We also held the 2014 International Disaster Response Conference at the seminary in Fort Wayne. With more than 142 individuals in attendance, it was a wonderful success. Of the attendees, 34 were considered "International," including nine guests from Latin America, eight from Africa, five from Eurasia, three from Asia Pacific, one from Southern Asia and Oceania, one from North America, six from Lutheran Hour Ministries, and one from Luther Academy. Overall, 22 different Lutheran church bodies (including the LCMS) were represented at this historic conference. Discussed at the conference were the responses to the typhoon in the Philippines, the earthquake and fire in Chile, and Hurricane Sandy. Other notable topics were worship in time of disaster, speaking the Gospel in time of disaster, and a theology of mercy by President Harrison, among others. Many connections were made to further our relationships with these other church bodies during time of disaster.

In response to natural and man-made disasters—

- In November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines. Disaster Response was on site for a week working with the Lutheran Church of the Philippines (LCP). It was coordinated by Disaster Response, regional area staff, and leaders from the LCP. We provided emergency grants to the LCP directly, as well as to Lutheran World Relief and Orphan Grain Train. These were for basic food and medical supplies and shelter kits. While on the ground, we established an action plan

with the LCP and determined what our continued assistance would consist of. A cash-for-work program and livelihood projects were also put in place and a number of visits from Disaster Response staff ensured that each of the projects were carried out according to plan. We also led a conference for church workers and their families on self-care and critical incident stress management. Finally, our established relationship with the LCP allowed us to schedule a number of conferences (for church-worker care) in collaboration with DOXOLOGY and Luther Academy. We committed to three years of a yearly conference on Mercy and Disaster Response. Our part in this conference will end in November 2016, and Luther Academy has committed to continue those conferences with an eye toward theological education and more generalized topics. In total, we granted more than \$525,000 in response to Typhoon Haiyan.

- There were also several significant disasters across the Latin American region, including earthquakes and fires in Chile, mudslides in Peru, and hurricanes in Mexico and the Caribbean. Numerous visits to affected areas were carried out by Disaster Response staff. Training was also provided to seminary students from Argentina who then spent several days walking the affected areas in Chile, providing spiritual care to the families who were still dealing with the disaster. A mercy center was purchased via the granting process (\$38,000) and is the location where a new church plant has formed.
- The Ebola crises killed thousands of Africans in 2014–15 and brought fear to much of the Western world. In response, Disaster Response provided grants (nearly \$100,000) to our Lutheran partners in West Africa to provide health supplies and education.

New Triennium Major Goals:

Training and preparedness (including theological education)—

- Over the next three years, we intend to host/lead two yearly conferences on disaster preparedness with the same goal as our previous conferences. Since our recent conferences were focused in the Latin American region, these next three years will focus instead on the other regions of OIM operations.
- We are tentatively planning on our next International Disaster Response Conference for 2017 here in the United States. We will again invite leaders from our partner churches throughout the world to share this time with us.
- In partnership with the LWML, \$80,000 was granted to enlarge the seminary in the Dominican Republic as a mercy education center. It will serve as a site for the ongoing training of missionaries, church partners, and Latin American seminarians, and as a resource center in time of disaster.

In response to natural and man-made disasters—

- Our goal over the next three years is to maintain a quick engagement of international partners (LCMS and other Lutherans) on the ground and deploy to the region if necessary. Our ability to assist in the development and implementation of Disaster Response plans greatly increases our efficiency and ultimately provides for a greater stewardship of the resources available.
- We also intend to continue providing grants to our partner churches to help build their capacity and effectiveness (\$400,000 budgeted).

Life and Health Ministries—Stephanie Neugebauer, Director

Life Ministry: Life Ministry carries the banner both in our church body and the culture at large that all life is sacred from conception until natural death. Through a variety of resources, publications, and programs, Life Ministry supports and encourages life as made in the image of God.

Life Ministry is currently in partnership with several overseas projects. The Hope Family Counseling Center in St. Petersburg, Russia, serves men and women by providing counseling on marital issues, unplanned pregnancy, and spiritual concerns. Hope also provides help in obtaining prenatal care for pregnant mothers, clothing and food for families, and on-site computer classes for job training. The

ELCM (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia) Women's Care and Counseling Center in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, provides compassionate care and counseling services for women who find themselves with an unplanned pregnancy. ELCM Women's Center assists women in considering alternatives to abortion and baby-dumping, which is an all-too-popular practice in Malaysia. The Kyrgyzstan Medical Trailer in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, provides high-standard free pediatric, dental, and gynecological care and gives verbal Christian witness to the patients that they serve. The goal for the future triennium is that Life Ministry will only strengthen its supportive relationships with these centers and explore options for additional service in other regions of the world not yet served by Life Ministry.

In addition to this, Life Ministry plans on promoting its life resources internationally by translating its most popular materials for use in other countries and regions of the world. Finally, in this next triennium, Life Ministry also hopes to provide an abstinence program which can be translated and adapted to areas which request it.

Health Ministry: Health Ministry complements the outreach of the church by promoting Christ-centered health and wellness of body, mind, and spirit. Through its domestic and international programs, Health Ministry has an expansive reach which delivers health and wellness education and support to individuals and churches in need.

Parish nursing is a division of Health Ministry which has reach both domestically and internationally. The parish nurse is a registered nurse who is committed to health ministry, working alongside the pastor within the context of a congregation or local community to deliver wellness programs in support of the pastoral ministry. The parish nursing program currently offers continuing education for their registered nurses via a monthly video-based educational session, with topics revolving around theology, medicine, and patient care. The goal for the parish nurse program is to coordinate efforts with the Concordia University System so that students may consider parish nursing following their collegiate training. In addition, the parish nurse program is looking for ways to expand their reach internationally, with the long-term goal of providing each region with one or two trained LCMS parish nurses.

Mercy Medical Teams is another extension of Health Ministry wherein the church and her people are served globally. Mercy Medical Teams is a short-term volunteer program which offers medical professionals, lay people, and pastors opportunities to serve abroad in a variety of clinical and health-related settings. These teams are trained by the LCMS and work in conjunction with LCMS partner churches and international clinics to deliver primary care to countries such as Kenya, Haiti, Madagascar, Guatemala, and Indonesia. Since the program's founding in 2006, over 40,000 patients have been served, and over \$1,000,000 in medication has been delivered. It is the vision that within the next year Mercy Medical Teams will be in partnership with three additional countries.

Health Ministry also recognizes that greater focus must be had for the health and wellness of professional church workers and their families (ref. 2013 Res. 3-11A, "To Support Church Workers"). Health Ministry began efforts in 2015 to coordinate with Specialized Pastoral Ministry, the Synod's recognized service organizations, and Concordia Plan Services to create a concise resource which will lay out professional counseling options, mental health resources, and physical health programs for use by LCMS called workers, serving both domestically and internationally.

Reports by St. Louis Operations

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

The greatest blessing is that God has sent us faithful pastors to serve as military chaplains during these most challenging times,

both culturally and on religious freedom. During a time when many denominations are having a difficult challenge getting qualified pastors to serve in the military as chaplains, the LCMS has been blessed! We have several who have answered the call to serve the men and women of our armed forces by bringing them Word and Sacrament ministry and showing the compassion and mercy of Jesus Christ to those whom they are "called to serve." Yet we still need more! Your Ministry to the Armed Forces (MAF) chaplains voluntarily go into harm's way, serving in physically dangerous and austere conditions, but also into harm's way of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ in season and out of season to their flock being challenged by the cultural shift. Yet, they are free to be faithful. 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 as well as all those who serve our nation in uniform selflessly and voluntarily and their families (ref. 2013 Res. 1-12, "To Recognize and Give Thanks for Military and Institutional Chaplains").

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 66 active-duty LCMS military chaplains. Another 71 chaplains serve Reserve and National Guard units. We also support 22 Civil Air Patrol chaplains and two Directors of Religious Education (DRE). Your MAF continues to support them with prayers, pastoral care, Lutheran continuing education, 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.

Our goal is to have 72 active-duty chaplains and 80 Reserve and/or National Guard chaplains by 2018. We continue to recruit and encourage our young pre-seminary university students, seminarians, and parish pastors to consider serving our Lord and His Church as military chaplains. The average age group is from 18–25 years old that our military chaplains serve on a daily basis. It is a challenging calling; however, it is very rewarding as they are present 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 Sixth Commandment 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 on marriage and sexual orientation. Chaplains are still protected by law and policy of the Department of Defense to preach and teach in accordance with the tenets of their faith. While certainly living in a challenging environment, they are still free to be faithful and uphold the teaching of the Word of God and the LCMS. There is no doubt that MAF will keep an eye on this and ensure our chaplains receive the support they need as there is a constant movement from organizations and individuals seeking to mandate compromise and violation of conscience and religious liberty.

Another new challenge will be assisting our LCMS personnel to navigate through the changed policy of women in combat arms positions that used to be closed to women. The movement to include women in the Selective Service registration process is also a concern for many of our members. MAF will continue to work with our chaplains and Department of Defense as more guidance is given from both the Department of Defense and our LCMS in reference to the issue conscripting women to serve in combat positions and/or the Selective Service process.

MAF continues the Ministry-by-Mail program which sends Lutheran devotional materials and resources (including *Portals of Prayer*) to more than 6,000 Lutheran military personnel and their families stationed throughout the world. Our goal is to increase that number by 1,000 each year as we know there are more LCMS members who are serving our nation in uniform. We will continue to encourage parents, grandparents, local congregations, and friends to submit contact information of their loved ones serving in the military so we can reach out to them with this program as well as put them in touch with LCMS chaplains and congregations where they are stationed. We need the help of our LCMS members to send in the contact information for those who are currently serving in the military so we can support them.

One key highlight for MAF centers on care for veterans. Operation Barnabas, organized in 2007, not only supports our pastors who are also Reserve chaplains but also our Lutheran veterans in the pew and the millions of veterans who live in the shadow of our churches but never attend any church. It is estimated that there are currently more than 30 million 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 and draw them back to the cross of Christ by the grace of God. 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-related people.

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

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

Many new veterans are returning to the civilian world after serving their country. We need to continue to establish Operation Barnabas congregations who will be equipped to welcome them and give them the support they need as they transition to other vocations. Our goal by the end of 2018 is to have 900 LCMS congregations join Operation Barnabas as either a congregation or a chapter and be a part of our network of care for military-connected people.

The DMin Military Chaplain Program initiated in 2005 is designed exclusively for our military chaplains to enable them to complete a doctoral degree while remaining on active duty. The DMin program can be successfully completed within a four-to-five-year time frame by completing in-residence intensive courses offered at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, during January and in the summer. Students in the DMin program may receive credits from the Command and Staff College of the military that contribute to the 54 credit hours required for the degree. The DMin program is supported by a Military Chaplain Endowment Fund created by MAF, which holds a current balance of around \$55,000. Currently, there are seven chaplain/students active

in the degree program, with three or more candidates in process of matriculation. The goal for the next three years will be to get six more chaplains through the DMin program.

Missionary Recruitment—Rev. Daniel McMiller, Associate Executive Director

The 2013 convention Res. 1-11 approved the goal of doubling the number of career missionaries supported by the Synod. At that time of Res. 1-11, the OIM was supporting 68 career missionaries. In the time since Res. 1-11, 76 career missionaries have accepted calls and been sent to serve by the OIM. In order to calculate the current number of career missionaries, consideration must be given to those missionaries who have concluded their international service. As of this writing, there are presently 112 career missionaries. As it stands, the goal of Res. 1-11 could yet be achieved with calling of new career missionaries during the January and May Board of International Mission calling cycles.

During this time between conventions, OIM established a missionary recruitment team directed by Rev. Dan McMiller. David A. Fiala was called to assist the director of recruitment and specifically to target the recruitment of laypeople for Career and GEO missionary service. The Concordia University System schools, LCMS district and LWML conventions, congregational and school events, LCMS U, other mission conferences, social media, and the LCMS website are all being utilized as platforms for recruitment efforts. Additional conversations are being had with Concordia universities regarding the potential for cooperation with OIM for international internships (i.e., DCE or student teaching).

Though recruitment efforts are gaining traction, the recent influx of new missionaries to new field assignments is presenting challenges regarding the oversight of university student or young professional (GEO) team members. Missionary Recruitment estimates that roughly 50 percent of our current career missionary staff is new and therefore likely will require time to settle in to their roles before they will be interested in requesting additional career missionaries, let alone being able to provide excellent care, direction, and support to university student or GEO missionaries.

Missionary Recruitment, together with COMM, has produced an information packet containing basic information about the work of LCMS missionaries around the world for potential missionary candidates.

Missionary Services—Rev. Dr. Edward Grimenstein, Associate Executive Director

Past Triennium Major Accomplishments: The Missionary Services department, composed of six full-time staff, provides care and support to LCMS missionaries as well as to their spouses and children. During the current triennium, the Missionary Services department has undertaken a number of projects in order to provide better care and support for her missionaries. Some of these initiatives include the following:

- *Increased number of missionary orientation sessions.* In an effort to better train missionaries and to better reflect the fields' needs for the timely arrival of missionaries, the Missionary Services department has added a two-week Winter Missionary Orientation to complement the already existing two-week Summer Missionary Orientation. Missionary Services has also created a "mini-orientation session." This session, which is comprised of three days of on-site orientation along with several online components, allows a new missionary to receive a brief orientation for unique situations in which a missionary may need to begin service. The missionary would then return to receive a fuller orientation session either during winter or summer.
- *Orientation for spouses and children.* During this past triennium, the Missionary Services department has succeeded in creating specialized training for spouses and children during the two-week missionary orientation. Since most missionary spouses are female, there have now

been six courses created that will help these wives better navigate culture shock and other realities of international service for themselves and their family. During the two-week orientation, children also receive training to better understand what life may look like for them as a “child missionary.” For teenagers, deployment topics are also covered by different methods, including the bringing in of former missionary children who have the opportunity to speak with these teens about what life could look like for them while serving on the field.

- *DOXOLOGY training sessions.* Missionary Services has forged a relationship with the popular DOXOLOGY program in which a special program has been created and geared specifically toward the needs of missionaries and their families. Upon completion of the two-week orientation in St. Louis, a particular missionary orientation class is brought back together to attend a two-day DOXOLOGY retreat program centered upon adapting to culture shock, dealing with adversity, and providing encouragement to them as they prepare to deploy to the international field.
- *Counseling care.* In an effort to provide proper mental health care for missionaries and their families while they are serving on the international field, Missionary Services has forged a relationship with *Lutheran Counseling Services Florida*. They are also contracted with OIM to provide week-long debriefing sessions for LCMS missionaries when they complete their service and plan to return to the United States. The debriefing allows missionaries and their families the opportunity to receive counseling, prepare for reverse culture shock, and decompress as they prepare for the tasks that are before them.
- *Improved regional coordination.* Through streamlining of processes and improved coordination with the various regional business managers, Missionary Services has reduced the average time for reimbursement from 21+ days down to an average of five to seven business days. This improved efficiency of funds-transfers allows missionaries to be less concerned with the reimbursement of their monies and better focused upon their calling of serving as a missionary.
- *Overhaul of database.* A major accomplishment for Missionary Services has been the overhaul of the existing database to ensure that all missionaries and dependents were accounted for and could be contacted at any time. The new database also allows for better tracking of historical data of missionary service.
- *Revised Missionary Manual.* One of the greatest accomplishments for the Missionary Services Department during this past triennium has been the revising of the Missionary Career/GEO Manual. This manual is a collection of all policies and procedures that missionaries, spouses, and children are to follow on the field while serving as a missionary for the LCMS.
- *Digital Missionary Care Chart.* Missionary Services created a digital “Missionary Care Chart” which allows missionaries the ability to identify every single person in the International Center who cares for them and what that care looks like, and, perhaps most important, it provides up-to-date contact information so the missionary might easily receive care.
- *Mission Friends children’s program.* *Mission Friends* is an online program where children receive a digital “passport” and can learn more about LCMS mission work within a country, discover “fun facts” about the country, and are encouraged to do recipes and craft activities with their teachers/parents which are related to that country. There is also a “Devotions at Home” sheet for parents and children to use together which provides Bible passages, missionary stories from the field, and Small Catechism excerpts all related to the specific LCMS mission work within that country. The program had a successful launch in September 2015 with 500 active users registered during the first quarter.

New Triennium Major Goals: In the next triennium, the team looks to continue to build upon the improvements that have already been made. In particular, with the large number of children accompanying their parents to the field (almost 400 children are on the international field), the team will be seeking for the best way to serve these

children and families while they serve on the international field. The team also desires to increase its coordination with each field office as it continues improving its support of new missionaries. Missionary Services will also continue to provide meaningful education via the New Missionary Orientation and will continue to look for ways to provide continuing education for the deployed missionaries and their families. In addition, Missionary Services plans to continue promoting the *Mission Friends* program. Missionary Services will also continue to develop the Short-Term Missions program to include development of a training program for participants, identification of team leaders who will accompany teams to the field, and the hiring of a director who will be able to better coordinate the long-term involvement of congregations with short-term teams.

PASTORAL EDUCATION

Seminary Data

While a complete “State of Seminary Education” report is posted at www.lcms.org/pastoraleducation, the following data provides a review of seminary enrollment over the previous triennium:

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, strives for a nurturing culture that is centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ with fidelity to the Lutheran Confessions. With formation focused both upon head and heart, the faculty strives to send forth “helpers of joy” to the congregations of the LCMS (2 Cor. 1:24).

Accountability is a key component in the seminary’s culture. During the last triennium, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was reviewed by its accrediting agencies: the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Accreditation vouches for the academic excellence of an institution’s faculty and degree programs, its financial sustainability, and responsible governance. The ATS was positive, reaffirming the seminary’s accreditation for a period of 10 years; the next major review will come in 2023. The seminary’s report to the HLC was so impressive that the seminary was invited to participate in an accreditation process that is strategically oriented, with ongoing improvements and developments to be regularly reported to the agency. This removes the need for a traditional 10-year review. During the last triennium, Concordia Seminary awarded 257 academic degrees (PhD, STM, MA, DMin, and MDiv).

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, also is accountable to the federal government, especially the US Department of Education. There are regular reviews and audits of Title IV financial aid programs to ensure the eligibility of students for financial aid and federal work-study programs. Other federal agencies to which the seminary must report include the US departments of Veteran Affairs, Labor, Homeland Security, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The seminary also is accountable to the state of Missouri, St. Louis County, the city of Clayton, and the Metropolitan Sewer District for inspections and permits.

The discipline of accountability helps the Seminary see its challenges. Challenges facing Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, include low residential enrollments (reflecting the decline of the LCMS and smaller number of pre-seminary students in CUS schools). In the last triennium, CSL presented 356 pastoral candidates to the church and 20 deaconess candidates. There are not enough students to fill calls.

Racial and ethnic diversity is also a challenge. While enrollment in the seven routes leading to pastoral ministry is diverse, the population of the residential pastoral and deaconess programs is not. Accrediting agencies note this lack of diversity, but the challenge is

most important because our divinely mandated mission is to take the Gospel to all people.

The seminary thanks the people within the congregations of the LCMS for helping to put the seminary on the path to financial sustainability. Historically, Concordia Seminary received its primary revenue directly from the unrestricted budget of the LCMS. Direct funding from the LCMS has gradually declined. Loyal donors, largely born in the 1920s and 1930s, have risen to meet the challenge. With the help of *Generations: The Campaign for Concordia Seminary*, revenue from endowment and planned gifts will balance the seminary's revenue sources and enhance financial stability. Since 2010, the seminary has operated with no debt.

The dearest accountability of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is to the LCMS. In order to provide caring, Christ-centered pastors and deaconesses for faithful Lutheran ministry in the 21st century, the faculty is engaged in a complete revision of the residential program. The design of the new curriculum began by identifying the qualities people desire in a pastor, especially excellent theological formation combined with mature interpersonal skills. The faculty is now crafting the curricular and extracurricular experiences that will achieve the desired outcomes. The new curriculum will move the seminary from the quarter system to semesters, permitting greater interface with the schools of the Concordia University System. It will become operational in fall 2018.

For more information about Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, visit www.csl.edu or follow the seminary on Facebook (www.facebook.com/ConcordiaSem), Twitter (@ConcordiaSem), or Instagram (@concordiasem).

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Concordia Theological Seminary exists to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all. God continues to bless CTSFW richly through the faithful support of alumni, friends, and donors who have enabled the seminary to carry out this mission under Christ's leadership for the sake of the church and the world. Among the many blessings your seminary has experienced over the past three years:

- Strong leadership with Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. completing five years as president of CTSFW and enjoying positive relationships with students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, and regents.
- Ready to embrace new opportunities and challenges, President Rast has recently led the seminary community through development of a strategic plan that builds on what it means as a seminary to be distinctively Lutheran, community-oriented, and committed to excellence.
- Faithful, caring, missional students from all areas of the United States and around the world. Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, continues to be recognized as one of the leading confessional Lutheran seminaries in the world, called by some the "Wittenberg of the 21st century." The seminary is deeply grateful for God's abundant blessings of stable enrollment and the 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.
- Continued emphasis on residential pastoral formation through rigorous master of divinity and alternate route programs.
- Continued growth in the number of deaconesses formed for service through both residential and distance tracks (the distance track is a combination of online courses and campus intensive courses).
- Outstanding contextual learning opportunities for students through fieldwork, summer vicarages, vicarages, and targeted module learning experiences.
- Significant growth in the revised doctor of ministry program that combines academic and pastoral excellence, distance and residential learning components, yet is very affordable.

- Continuation of the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program with new students each year and the development of a Spanish-language SMP track in order to train Latino pastors in context (also publicized as Bilingual Pastoral Formation for Latinos).
- Continuation of a strong PhD in missiology program under the leadership of Dr. Detlev Schulz that draws students from around the globe.
- Collaboration with the OIM with assisting in the training of pastors and deaconesses as well as organizing theological libraries in Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and elsewhere.
- Expansion of the international impact of our graduate program through the establishment and ATS approval of a site for our master of sacred theology program courses in Gothenburg, Sweden.
- Development of the Missionary Formation Certificate Program at CTSFW which is a continuing education experience for missionaries consisting of six online modules.
- Completion and dedication of the Wayne and Barbara Kroemer Library Complex, which includes the renovation of the original library building.
- Implementation of the Lilly Endowment funded research and education for students, congregations, districts, and the Synod on the issue of overcoming the burden of student indebtedness.
- An outstanding faculty with rich pastoral ministry experience as well as the highest academic credentials from such outstanding universities as Harvard, Yale, Michigan, Vanderbilt, Notre Dame, Wisconsin, Durham, Oxford, Drew, Marquette, and Basel.
- The naming of Dr. Arthur A. Just Jr. as the Director of Spanish Language Church Worker Formation at CTSFW to work with the LCMS OIM to launch an international training program in partnership with the Lutheran Church of Argentina.
- The establishment of the Robert D. Preus Chair in Systematic Theology and Confessional Lutheran Studies through gifts and the appointment of Dr. Roland Ziegler as the first holder of this chair.
- Expanded urban missional formation through two national conferences hosted at CTSFW and the deployment of students for missional experiences in Baltimore and New Jersey.
- Significant leadership from CTSFW on the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (the president chairing the CTCR and two faculty serving as committee chairs).
- Collaboration with the Office of the President of the LCMS, the Office of Church Relations, and the OIM toward the implementation of the LCMS's Global Seminary Initiative.
- The continued publication of *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, praised internationally as a key resource for fostering confessional Lutheranism.
- Accreditation for all of its academic programs through the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (next accreditation cycle will be in 2020).

CTSFW has served the Synod faithfully by making the blessings of the church available to a world in need of Christ's salvation. To that end, it has been privileged to provide the church with more than 5,000 pastors and missionaries who have served the Lord of the Church throughout the United States and the world.

We invite you to get to know CTSFW better. Visit our website at www.ctsfw.edu or our campus where you will find a vibrant, Christ-centered theological community that engages and provides resources for the church and world, domestically and internationally, with distinctively Lutheran teaching, practice, and worship. Join with CTSFW bringing the saving Gospel into all the world by forming servants in Jesus Christ who will teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all.

Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS)

In an increasingly secular society, we need our pastors to receive the best preparation possible and to continue in that education. This is necessary so the Gospel can be taught in its truth and purity and pastoral care applied in the midst of the myriad challenges facing us

today. Critical in setting a firm foundation are the early years in a pastor's ministry.

Pastors and congregations are mutually benefitted when pastors stay longer in their call. The PALS program was established specifically to give all pastors and their families the best start possible and continues to aid in the transition to life in the parish today.

Therefore, as mandated by delegates to the Synod's 2013 convention (ref. 2013 Res. 5-02A, "To Support and Encourage Participation in Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support Initiative"), the LCMS should continue to improve, expand, and support the PALS Initiative. In addition, districts and congregations receiving new seminary graduates should continue their support for the program and encourage new pastors to participate.

Since the 2013 convention, the PALS office was honored to welcome Rev. Dr. Gary Zieroth as Interim Director of the PALS Program. He has brought a wealth of pastoral experience and Synod service to the program.

Also since the 2013 convention, several more districts have returned to or joined the PALS program, bringing the total number of participating districts to 33 out of 35.

The PALS program continues to provide new curriculum and resources for its participants. In the past triennium, new courses have been created on topics from pastoral leadership and parish administration to pastoral care at life's end.

Other PE Accomplishments

Highlights of the past triennium include the following:

- Provided for distribution of grants from the Synod (unrestricted and restricted) to the seminaries
- Continued publication of a quarterly *Pastoral Education* insert for the *Reporter*
- Arranged an LCMS Theology Professors Convocation (May 2014 and 2016) comprised of all Concordia University System school professors who teach theology, all seminary professors, and pre-seminary directors for the purpose of theological discussion and joint work on theological issues for the benefit of the church
- July 2013–June 2014, worked with the COP to develop a list of qualified continuing education resources and activities. Worked with several district presidents and key individuals from both seminaries to design a process for continuing education to be utilized by pastors following seminary graduation (ref. 2013 Res. 5-08B, "To Establish a Standard for Continuing Education of Pastors");
- Worked with key individuals to reach consensus on the procedures for the seminary faculty prior approval process
- July 2013–June 2014, chaired task force to conduct a study of the non-MDiv routes to the pastoral office
- Held a two-day conference in July 2013 for pre-seminary program directors—significant issues here involved pre-seminary formation at the university level and a more seamless partnership between the CUS schools and seminaries

MISSION ADVANCEMENT

What God Supplied for the Work of His Church: 2013–16

For the 2013–16 triennium period, MA worked collaboratively alongside Synod Accounting and COMM to improve public transparency and accountability regarding what God supplied in donations to the Synod. Reports on charitable gifts received were presented in three special "State of the Synod" issues of *The Lutheran Witness*. Each of the annual issues presented a year-to-year comparison of data regarding amounts, number of donors and number of gifts in the broad categories of district pledges (unrestricted), additional unrestricted donations, contributions restricted in their use by donor intent, and bequests. MA will continue this reporting practice into the foreseeable future.

For the three fiscal years preceding this convention, corporate Synod's cost for MA efforts averaged 9.449 percent of all contributions expended, with a low of 8.403 percent (fiscal year 2014) and a high of 10.650 percent (fiscal year 2015).

Updates on Special Synod Campaigns and Initiatives

Fan into Flame

For all intents and purposes, the Synod's unique *Fan into Flame* campaign is concluded, with fewer than two dozen active pledges still open to receiving gifts. While the campaign fell short of its ambitious goal of raising \$100 million, *Fan into Flame* did stimulate a wave of significant giving beyond normal levels to fund increased local, regional, national, and international witness efforts. Due to forces beyond the campaign's control—notably, the Great Recession which began in 2008 and the complete restructuring of corporate Synod approved in 2010—an atypically high percentage of outstanding campaign pledges were ultimately written off as uncollectable.

Lutheran Malaria Initiative (ref. 2013 Res. 2-06, "To Encourage a Strong Finish for the Lutheran Malaria Initiative (LMI) and Give Thanks for the Effect LMI Has Had on the Global Fight to End Malaria-Related Deaths in Africa")

As a campaign, the Lutheran Malaria Initiative (LMI) concluded active fund-raising efforts April 30, 2014, and shifted into its passive pledge-collection period on May 1. In June 2014, the LCMS and Lutheran World Relief agreed on steps to close down shared fund-raising activities, the mutual sharing of fund-raising information, and joint donor communication and accountability efforts. In July 2015, the LCMS closed down its promotion of LMI and continues to encourage gifts under the name "LCMS Malaria Project." Despite the transition away from LMI, Synod households, congregations, and schools continue to financially support the fight against malaria-triggered deaths. At the official close of the LMI campaign, cash and pledges totaled just shy of \$7 million dollars, well short of the joint LCMS/LWR goal of \$45 million. Through Dec. 31, 2015, the portion of LMI gifts and pledges sent through the LCMS International Center totaled \$3,741,568 (\$3,683,912 in cash; \$57,656 in active pledges). Close to \$700,000 in pledged support was written off as uncollectable. Support for LMI came from all 35 districts, a first for any Synod campaign. More important, the frequency of deaths attributable to malaria in sub-Saharan Africa dropped from one every 30 seconds to one death every two minutes, according to the World Health Organization. The Synod enters the new triennium with just over \$500,000 in available LMI/LCMS Malaria Project funding to use in malaria-prevention work leading to Lutheran Gospel outreach.

The Wittenberg Project (ref. 2013 Res. 1-07B, "To Support the Wittenberg Project for the Quincentennial Celebration of the Lutheran Reformation")

The dedication and opening of the Old Latin School in Wittenberg, Germany, did not bring an end to fund-raising efforts intended to fully fund its renovation costs with restricted gifts. Due to flooding along the Elbe River and increased competition for labor and materials by other Reformation anniversary renovation projects, the LCMS began the renovation earlier than planned to lock in lower labor and materials rates. The International Lutheran Society of Wittenberg, which includes the LCMS as a partner, was blessed to be granted a two million dollar line of credit from Lutheran Church Extension Fund to cover any gaps between cash received and necessary renovation expenditures. Gifts and pledges through Dec. 31, 2015, total \$3,782,992, including a gift to purchase the building and feasibility funding to prepare and evaluate various renovation plans. By God's grace, the amount borrowed from LCEF as of Jan. 15, 2016, was less than \$600,000 after all renovation-related invoices were paid. Fund-raising efforts, involving a dedicated group of volunteers supported

by MA and COMM, will continue until the LCEF line of credit is paid off.

Other Special Initiatives

MA is coordinating the initial fund-raising work to launch and ultimately sustain a confessing Lutheran presence in Washington DC under the name “Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty,” or LCRL. Through December 2015, donor engagement efforts resulted in cash gifts totaling \$1,054,057 toward a \$2.2 million goal, excluding written or verbal commitments of future support.

COMMUNICATIONS

How We Serve

News and Information

The news and information of the Synod—involving its many ministries, auxiliaries, partners, and recognized service organizations—provide a steady stream of content for a variety of audiences and is delivered through the following media outlets:

Church Information Center—lcms.org/cic

- o Year-round call center and email responses to questions, concerns, and information coming into the Synod
- o More than 34,000 queries answered in the past triennium:
 - 62 percent laity queries
 - 15 percent clergy queries
 - 12 percent church or school staff queries
 - 11 percent from others

Reporter (print and online)—blogs.lcms.org/reporter

- o Official newspaper of the LCMS
- o News and action of the Synod offices, boards, ministries, and task forces
- o Mailing list: professional church workers, lay leaders, convention delegates, subscribers, and others
- o Monthly circulation: 34,000
- o Completely redesigned in 2013
- o Most-read stories this triennium (on *Reporter Online*):
 - “Harrison releases letter on landmark Supreme Court ruling.” Unique page views: 54,328.
 - Commentary: “Should Lutherans take ‘Ice Bucket Challenge’?” Unique page views: 50,498.
 - “Lutheran Hour float wins Rose Parade award.” Unique page views: 17,227.
 - “Pastor provides care after plane crash with 7-year-old survivor.” Unique page views: 14,850.
 - Movie review on “Fury” (one of 33 film reviews by the Rev. Ted Giese we have run thus far). Unique page views: 14,260.

The Lutheran Witness (print and online)—cph.org/witness/

- o The official magazine of the LCMS—now in its 135th year of continuous publication
- o Mission statement: “*Providing Missouri Synod laypeople with stories and information that complement congregational life, foster personal growth in faith and help interpret the contemporary world from a Lutheran Christian perspective.*”
- o Monthly circulation: 106,500
- o Catechetical, theological content
- o Official Notices

Lutherans Engage the World—blogs.lcms.org/category/lutherans-engage

- o Bimonthly magazine for LCMS rostered workers, donors, and other supporters
- o Mission Statement: “Engaging the church in the work of witness and mercy throughout the world in our life together as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.”

- o Circulation: 63,000

Journal of Lutheran Mission—blogs.lcms.org/category/journal-of-lutheran-mission

- o Online quarterly theological journal focused on the theology of mission

Global Content Feed—blogs.lcms.org

- o A central, online collection of several news and information sources:
 - Publications:
 - *Reporter*, *The Lutheran Witness*, *Lutherans Engage the World*, *Journal of Lutheran Mission*
 - LCMS Leader Blog: blogs.lcms.org/category/leader-blog
 - National News and Information Blog: blogs.lcms.org/category/ministry-news/national
 - International News and Information Blog: blogs.lcms.org/category/ministry-news/international

Life Together monthly digital-news digest from the Synod President

- o A subscription-based online compendium of the top stories and other highlights from multiple communications outlets of the church. Includes stories, photos, videos, links to KFUO-AM radio programming, etc. (More on this digest below.)

Pressroom—blogs.lcms.org/category/pressroom

- o Online source for official communications:
 - Office of the President
 - Official statements
 - Press releases

Social Media

- o LCMS Facebook page with 100,000-plus followers
- o 15 unique ministry Facebook pages
- o Twitter page with nearly 14,000 followers
- o Instagram

Ministry Support

We support the communication needs of some 25 Synod ministries and mission regions in various ways:

Training Materials

Working with ministry leaders, we write, edit, design, and produce training materials to enhance witness and mercy work:

- o Printed and digital manuals, PowerPoint slides, videos
- o Examples:
 - *Mercy in Action* disaster-response training manuals
 - *What Is This? Looking at Life in the Womb*, a curriculum-and-video resource from LCMS Life Ministry

Event Support

Ministry-sponsored conferences, gatherings, and donor events are enhanced and supported in various ways:

- o Publicity
- o Signage
- o Participant materials/resources
- o News reporting
- o Examples:
 - 2015 Life Conference/March for Life in Washington DC
 - Dedication of the Old Latin School in Wittenberg, Germany—an event receiving extensive on-the-scene coverage, including a live video stream available worldwide and watched by some 10,000 people

Webpages

In cooperation and collaboration with the offices, ministries, and mission regions of the Synod, we create, manage, and update more than 1,500 webpages on lcms.org that have been viewed nearly 36 million times by a global and growing audience in the last triennium. Content includes the following:

- o Ministry information

- o Resources
- o Blog entries
- o Giving pages
- o Locators

Marketing and Promotion

Using the Synod's voice and brand, we promote LCMS ministries and resources to the church and the public:

- o Brochures
- o Posters
- o Infographics
- o Scrolling Web tiles
- o *Reporter* inserts
- o Promotional videos
- o Public service announcements

Missionary Support

Each network-supported LCMS missionary receives the following support:

- o Printed and downloadable prayer cards
- o Online giving pages
- o Communication training (photo, video, and writing and presentation skills) to enhance support raising
- o Missionary news and stories featured in the Synod publications

Cultural Engagement

In the face of increasing attacks on the church and the values she espouses, presenting and defending the Synod's views to the church and public has become an increasingly important part of our work and includes such instruments as the following:

- o *Free to Be Faithful* communication effort (more on this below) lcms.org/socialissues/freetobefaitful
- o Dissemination of position statements
- o Engagement with the secular press:
 - Answering press queries
 - Holding press conferences
- o Defending theological positions in the wider culture:
 - Four-week campaign in the summer of 2015 defending life and responding to the notorious Planned Parenthood videos involving the harvesting and selling of baby parts
- o Lutheran Reformation website (done in cooperation with Concordia Publishing House): LutheranReformation.org

Public Relations/Media Management/Marketing

We promote the Synod's work and stances on societal issues by fostering positive public and media relations through the following means:

- o Press management
- o Media training and coaching for ministry leaders
- o Press releases
- o Marketing of key initiatives and ministry efforts to the public
- o Exhibit creation and presentation at synodwide and district events

Donor Communications

In support of and in collaboration with MA, we encourage positive donor responses and relationships:

- o Write/edit appeal letters
- o Create materials (brochures, case statements, videos, posters, etc.) that promote special projects:
 - Wittenberg Project: thewittenbergproject.org/
 - Rosa Young film: lcms.org/thefirstrosa
- o Online project catalog: lcms.org/givenow
- o *Lutherans Engage the World* magazine

Key Accomplishments in the Past Triennium

Reaching the Laity

Over the past triennium, COMM has focused on increasing our reach to, and engagement with, LCMS laity, rostered workers, and confessing Lutherans worldwide. In this digital age, the most direct and economical approaches to accomplishing this goal involve utilizing the Internet with various subscriber options. To that end, the following online initiatives were planned and carried out on behalf of the LCMS and its ministries:

Leader Blog—blogs.lcms.org/category/leader-blog

- o A blog by LCMS ministry leaders to share their thoughts, ideas, and approaches to ministry

Global Content Feed—lcms.org/news-and-blogs

- o A user-friendly location on lcms.org to find all online publications and blogs

Life Together Digest—lcms.org/lifetogetherdigest/archives

- o Aggregate electronic newsletter of top monthly news, stories, videos, photos, etc. As of this writing (January 2016), this still-new effort had garnered more than 2,100 subscribers.

Social Media

Today, social media is the most immediate and far-reaching tool to disseminate news and information and to discover audience opinions and trends. It's also very economical. We are constantly monitoring our presence on the following social-media platforms even as we research and consider new platforms where we might reach more people with the church's messages.

Facebook—facebook.com/TheLCMS

- o As noted above, we have a growing global audience of 100,000-plus followers, adding hundreds of new followers weekly and more than doubling the number of followers since January 2014. In terms of "page likes," the Synod has one of the largest (if not the single largest) Lutheran presences on Facebook.
- o 15,000 of those followers come from countries outside the United States, including the Philippines and Brazil, with some 5,000 followers, as well as significant followings in non-Christian countries like Pakistan, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia.
- o Our most popular posts reach more than half a million viewers and are shared hundreds of times by those who see them.
- o We've begun to create and share Lutheran-specific memes and shareable content that teaches and reinforces the faith.

Twitter—twitter.com/thelcms

- o The social-media platform Twitter is key to reaching the Millennial Generation and Generation X.
- o We've successfully promoted and hosted three tweet-chats aimed at specific audiences and providing participants with direct access to President Harrison.

Instagram—instagram.com/thelcms

With the addition of a staff photojournalist, thousands of photos depicting the Witness, Mercy, and Life Together work of the Synod can be easily posted and shared. (More on this photojournalist immediately below.)

Photo Archive—photo.lcms.org/#!/index

In November 2013, we added an award-winning professional photojournalist to our staff. Since then, he has visually shaped the national and international Witness, Mercy, and Life Together mission work of the LCMS through photographic storytelling in some 15 countries and 20 states. We have amplified, through compelling imagery, our disaster, mercy, and international ministry work centered on the mission priorities of the LCMS; created an image archive comprising an array of galleries; and continued to teach new missionaries visual literacy for their ongoing work in the field.

- o More than 170 photographically documented stories from America and around the world.

- o Photo archive of more than 10,000 color-corrected, high-resolution curated photographs for our publications

Expanded Video Archive—video.lcms.org

Since 2013, our two-member video team, lead by an experienced newsroom producer, has gathered 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 to shape and tell the stories of our collective work, making a case for its support.

- o 152 video productions, totaling 2,677 minutes, or 44-plus hours, have been produced and uploaded to our YouTube channel since August 2013.
- o YouTube channel viewers watched for 9,406 hours.
 - Our strongest demographic is men ages 25–34, an encouraging and desirable core of young viewership.
 - Our top five viewing countries: United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil.

Ministry Support

Coordinated by our three-member production team, COMM produces a variety of projects on behalf of the Synod's offices and ministries. Often, these projects are multifaceted efforts that include combinations of print, Web, video, photography, and extensive graphic design. Many involve marketing and promotional pieces or conference and ministry resources.

- o 3,000-plus projects in the last triennium, many of these multifaceted (i.e., involving multiple pieces)
- o Examples:
 - Life Ministry ultrasound curriculum
 - Book-length memoir of Papua New Guinea missionary Rev. Dr. Otto Hintze
 - Missionary prayer cards and giving pages for each LCMS missionary
 - Disaster Ministry *Mercy in Action* curriculum for pastors, educators, and congregations
 - *Free to Be Faithful* donor events
 - Coordination of the LCMS exhibit at 35 district conventions
 - District and synodwide presence at conferences and conventions

Undergirding our production team is the battery of graphic designers and writers in the department. Besides designing and laying out a host of other materials, both print and electronic, our graphics people also design every issue of *The Lutheran Witness, Reporter*, and *Lutherans Engage the World*. Meanwhile, our small team of writers and editors is responsible for a prolific output of top-quality editorial work.

Special Campaigns

As the culture continues to drift away from God's will and Word, the church is increasingly challenged to speak up and out to defend God's teachings on a variety of social matters. To that end, COMM has collaborated with the Office of the President and the ONM to create a growing number of resources and opportunities for the church to proactively defend the sanctity of life, traditional marriage, and religious liberties:

- o Free to Be Faithful—lcms.org/socialissues/freetobefaitful
 - An education and awareness campaign aimed at inspiring LCMS rostered members and laity to take informed action to protect the freedom of religion.
- o Social Issues Webpage—lcms.org/socialissues
 - In an effort to help the people of God maneuver through this earthly kingdom and the many social issues confronting them in their daily vocations, a growing body of resources on topics ranging from domestic violence to religious liberty is being as-

sembled to help inform and guide the Christian life, as each baptized child of God lives out the faith.

- Multi-week campaign in response to the Center for Medical Research's undercover videos exposing Planned Parenthood:
- Multiple e-blasts to inform the church and encourage members to speak out, including resources for individuals and parishes
- *It Is Time to End Abortion* video—video.lcms.org/archives/3187
- 48,000 views on Facebook

Future Plans

Create a Network of Lutheran Communicators

In this age of rapidly changing communication technologies and the growing challenge to be heard, we aim to intentionally connect with communicators in LCMS districts, colleges and universities, seminaries, and partner church bodies to foster a network that shares and encourages best practices through the following:

- o Direct contact and consultation
- o Hosting a biennial communicators conference for districts, schools, and partner church communicators to collectively strengthen and sharpen our skills and effectiveness

Multimedia Shareable Stories

No longer is it enough, in many cases, to provide a single photo and story of running text. Today's audiences demand robust storytelling that includes audio, visual imagery, infographics, and text. We are currently strategizing and investigating the best ways to present our collective Witness, Mercy, Life Together work in multimedia storytelling formats for easy viewing and sharing online.

Social-Media Advancement

Social media is a rapidly changing world of many-sided communication. The ability to connect in the moment and share a photo, video, thought, or experience with thousands across the globe and receive their reaction in an instant makes it a powerful communication tool.

Almost daily, new options for social media appear. What is the best use of these communication outlets for the church? How can she teach the faith and direct people formerly unknown to Lutheran altars and pulpits where they can experience Life Together in the family of God? How do we wisely engage the culture and speak the truth in love? These are questions we regularly ask and work to answer. In the coming triennium, we aim to do the following:

- o Employ new outlets where people are gathering online
- o Increase our use of social-media analytics to inform content creation and posting
- o Be more strategic in using social media to increase followers and their engagement with our content

Challenges

Our challenges are perpetual, and we are ever exploring new ways to meet them. Chief among these are the following:

- o Reaching more LCMS lay members directly through online engagement
- o Reaching a greater number of LCMS members under the age of 30. This is imperative for the future life of the church, and we are collaborating with our youth, young-adult, and campus-ministry leaders to meet this challenge.
- o Increasing the trust level of parish pastors so they feel confident in sharing our communications with their members. This can be accomplished only through the use of first-rate, worthwhile communications—content that is faithful to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions—delivered via an array of media outlets.
- o Handling a constantly growing number of project requests from ministry areas. The increasing demands for services tax our finite group of COMM staff people and force us to plan more carefully and seek more efficient ways of communicating to our audiences.

- o Being wise stewards of our resources while keeping up with the pace of communication technology in ways that serve the church well

Opportunities

- o Create a strong confessional Lutheran voice worldwide through joint communication efforts with our 37 partner church bodies
- o Collaborate with counterparts in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Evangelical Lutheran Synod to raise the confessional Lutheran voice in the United States
- o Mark and celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in ways that grow national and global awareness of Luther and the Reformation and help us expand our audience base
- o Continue to grow interest—both within and outside the Synod—in our online venues of communication. Over the past triennium, total page-visits to the Synod’s website and its various domains numbered nearly 36 million. In the not-so-distant future, under God’s blessing, we hope to crack 50 million ... and beyond.

Resources

- o Ever-increasing ways to communicate online through free and low-cost platforms
- o Our confession of faith and wondrous stories of God’s blessing the Synod’s missions and ministries at home and around the world. Without these stories, there would be nothing of value to communicate to the church and the world.
- o Finally, at the risk of sounding immodest, the 27 members of the COMM department bring an impressive depth of skill and experience, coupled with joy and passion, to the tasks we are given to do on behalf of the church. Since 2013, in the areas of publications, story writing, graphic design, marketing, Web, and photography, the staff has won 38 national awards from the Associated Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.

CONCLUSION

The sentiments that I shared with the LCMS Board of Directors soon after my arrival at the International Center last summer still very much “ring true” today:

As new CMO, I am very thankful for all the LCMS personnel in the Office of the President, at the International Center, and in various fields around the world who have offered a gracious welcome, offered assistance, and made many supportive efforts toward a smooth transition. And I truly appreciate the privilege of serving the Church in this unique capacity. As one “coming in” from the parish, I’ve been struck by the manner in which our faithful, passionate team consistently exudes optimism and inspires genuine confidence and hope as they talk about the delights, opportunities, challenges, and frustrations (including the oft-perplexing, complex nature) of their vocational tasks. We are in the midst of a great battle; yet, we already know and anticipate the outcome—sealed in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior—and we have been blessed with all the resources necessary to do our jobs now in accord with God’s good and perfect will.

“We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:18-19).

Dear delegates, it is my fervent prayer that your work at this convention abide to the glory of our gracious God. 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).

Rev. Kevin D. Robson, *Chief Mission Officer*

Entered into Rest

Ordained Ministers

Adetiba, Benjamin Audu	Castellani, John A	Gottberg, Gerald W	Kjergaard, Carlton F
Ahrens, Daniel L	Castens, Louis C	Grafe, William C	Klemz, Roger E
Albrecht, Thomas D	Childress, William M	Green, Lowell C	Klima, George A
Allen, David A	Childs, Gary J	Grother, Louis W	Klingebiel, Robert W
Anderson, Gary M	Cloeter, Martin R	Gunter, George	Knapp, Richard S
Armour, Thomas P	Coniglio, Frank Joseph	Haack, Lon R	Knepper, Theodore C*
Aumann, Robert P	Darkow, Fred C	Haak, Loel G	Knight, Vernon R
Baepler, Walter J	Darling, Cleighton David	Haener, Evan W	Knippa, Clarence W
Baerwolf, Robert D	De Vries, Kim T	Hall, Lester L	Knippenberg, Keith J
Barg, Edgar E	Dequin, Henry C	Hanel, David H	Knoppel, Gene K
Baron, Donald W	Devan, Edward J	Hanson, Philip W	Koch, John G
Bartz, Paul A	Dierks, William A	Harms, Elvin R	Koch, Marvin O
Bearss, Mac L	Dinkel, Emil L	Harms, Gerald E	Koch, Robert J
Beck, Alfred H	Dittmann, Robert Louis	Hart, Michael B	Koepchen, Paul K
Behnke, Richard W	Doan, Daniel H	Hartley, Dean R	Korb, Glenn L
Behnken, Duane P	Domsch, John F	Hartman, Jay Reid	Kramer, Herman W
Behring, Mark C	Dostert, William A	Hassold, William J	Krause, Paul E
Belk, Kit B	Dowdy, Kenneth L	Hattstaedt, Otto H	Krentz, Harold H
Benke, Steven J	Dressler, Waldimar W	Hausmann, William J	Krenzke, Richard L
Berner, Carl W	Duder, Clyburn	Heckmann, Harold A	Kretzmann, Otto H
Berninghaus, Gilbert B	Duerr, George F	Heilman, Mark L	Kriefall, Luther Harry
Beyer, Eugene A	Dup, Simon Ter	Heine, Herman H	Kroening, Elmer H
Bickel, Eldor F	Eckert, Leroy J	Heintz, Norman Herbert	Krohn, Orville E
Biesenthal, W Leroy	Ehlers, James M	Hendricks, Reinhold Merton	Kroll, Donald O
Biggs, Donald L	Elmshauser, James M	Hengst, Earnest J	Krout, Loren Richard
Bode, Richard P	Erbe, Ronald A	Henning, J C	Krueger, R Robert
Boeche, Harold A	Ernstmeyer, Milton Siebert	Herzog, James M	Kuehn, Clarence T
Boehlke, Melvin R	Everette, Stephen R	Heuiser, Douglas L	Kurth, Homer H
Boerger, John A	Faga, Robert O	Hintze, Robin Michael	Landskroener, John C
Bok, Wilbert E	Federwitz, Rocky L	Hoger, Donald R	Larson, James E
Bonner, Michael J	Fehner, James R	Hohenstein, Kenneth F	Laurent, Gulfrey Newton
Borchard, Terrance H	Feuerhahn, Ronald R	Holstein, Lowell J	Lehmann, Siegfried J
Borchelt, Herbert E	Fichtelman, Donald R	Holtz, Arlin A	Leighty, Fred Le Roy
Born, Clarence H	Fingerlin, Henry F	Holtz, Lowell D	Leitze, Walter E
Born, David J	Fink, Ronald Frank	Howard, Ronald	Lenz, Lloyd L
Bottjen, Dean L	Finsterle, George F	Huelse, Robert L	Li, John C P
Bowles, Ray E	Foley, James Robert	Husman, Richard H	Lidbom, Roy A
Bramstedt, Paul W	Frakes, Jeffrey Alan	Huwe, Ralph A	Lillich, Victor O
Brauer, Norman E	Frazen, Sidney J	Jacobsen, Frank A	Linen, Elmer E
Bremer, Richard A	Frerking, Robert D	Janssen, Ihno A	Linse, Eugene W
Brewer, Michael K	Frey, David Frederick	Jany, Lee M	Lisch, Elmer R
Brighton, Louis A	Fritz, John D	Janz, Marvin Philip	Lomba-George, Amado
Brinkman, F Peter	Frobe, Roger P	Jaster, John E	Long, Stephen F
Brockopp, Daniel C	Gabbert, Lambert G	Johansen, John	Lubben, Lowell L
Buchheimer, John R	Galster, Lenard	Johnson, Harlen L	Ludwig, Paul W
Busch, Leonard E	Gast, James R	Johnston, Gordon E	Lutz, Edward F
Buss, Gary L	Gaulke, Earl H	Jones, John R	Lutze, Karl E
Bussert, Paul E	Geiger, Oren H	Kaczor, Richard J	Mabry, Gilbert Richard
Buth, Kenneth Mark	Geisler, Stanley W	Kanitz, Kim A	Mangold, Kenneth J
Bye, Gregory	Gerdes, Everett E	Kellerman, Leroy W	Manske, Charles Louis
Byler, Gary L	Gerike, Gerhardt J C	Kettler, Earl C	Manus, Richard M
Carlson, Laurence H	Gerken, Oscar A	Kettner, Vernon R	Mappes, Martin L
Carr, Timothy J	Gibson, George	Keturakat, Charles W	Marcis, T Richard
Carter, Lynell H	Gohn, David P	Keuch, James F	Martin, Murray W
Caruana, Peter A	Gorentz, Bernard R	Keurulainen, James E	Mattson, Leonard D*
Cassidy, John S	Gotoski, Garland E	Keylon, Glen D	Maxwell, Lee A
	Gotsch, Richard J	Kienker, Paul D	Mc Crillis, Walter C

Mc Millan, Whitfield M	Reder, F Donald	Sting, Raymond P	Commissioned Ministers
McMurry, Todd M	Reiter, Carl C	Stoll, Allen R	Ahlman, Lillian A
Mc Whirter, John A	Reutz, Frederick W	Strand, Ahlert J C	Albers, Oscar H
Mehrl, Klaus M	Richert, Paul O	Stratman, William Warner	Baganz, Randal D
Mennicke, Victor O	Richter, Theodore M	Streufert, Carl A	Bangert, Arthur M
Meyer, Edward A	Rickus, Richard H	Studt, Donald O	Bassett, Leonard E
Meyer, Philip J	Riddle, Leonard E	Suehs, A Victor	Battermann, William E
Meyer, Robert F	Rieker, Eric H	Suhr, Marvin E	Bauer, Peter W*
Meyer, Robert L	Robbins, Douglas A	Swan, Melvin F	Beck, Dana J
Meyer, Virgil F	Rodeck, Alvin W	Temme, Norman L	Becken, Linda M
Mickow, Vernon H	Roser, William K	Tews, John M	Becker, Herbert H
Miguet, Stephen Edward	Rossow, Herman E	Theiss, Paul D	Behrens, Gary E
Miller, Robert S	Roth, Victor M	Thiemann, Eugene A	Bergman, Fred E
Misch, Charles Benjamin	Ruehrdanz, Walter E	Thiesen, Jack H	Bergolt, Mary L
Misterek, Wallace F	Rumerfield, Edwin A	Thomason, Warren J	Binzler, Reuben R*
Molitoris, John	Rupprecht, Robert J	Toelke, Carl H	Bishop, Paulette Anne
Molzan, Harold G	Russert, Martin L	Trowbridge, Gary D	Boehm, Jerry R
Moore, Pomeroy J	Ruthenbeck, Lornell L	Tyvela, Leslie D	Boldt, Jean L
Moritz, Victor E	Sampson, Marlin J	Uhlig, John P	Brandt, David R
Mueller, Arnold G	Sauer, Robert C	Ulrich, Leslie E	Brauer, Paul G
Mueller, Brett L	Schabacker, Martin C	Unger, Ralph E	Braun, Gregg Allen
Mueller, Charles R	Schaefer, Max L	Vavroch, John Anthony	Brisk, Donna M*
Mueller, Paul C	Schaible, H John	Vetter, Eugene H	Brunig, Ruth Ann
Mues, Robert Dean	Schalm, Roger B	Vomhof, Allen S	Brutlag, Carol A
Mundinger, George W	Schardt, Wayne M	Wackler, Myron E	Busse, Robert L
Murray, Milford C	Schauland, Helmut H	Wahlers, Arthur G	Buuck, Donald G
Myers, Robert F	Scheer, Raymond P	Walther, Herbert G	Carpenter, Robert M
Narr, Edwin J	Schlossman, Martin Leon	Wehmeier, Walter J	Chandler, F William
Naumann, George R	Schmidt, Martin J	Welmer, Michael F	Christiansen, Alfred O
Nauss, Milton J	Schneider, Walter Martin	Wenzel, Elmer W	Coe, Sharon K
Nieman, Henry F	Schoewe, Donald D	Wessel, Kenneth H	Cruise, James R
Nord, Randolph D	Schooler, Eugene E	Wessling, Mark Albert	Czech, Richard D
Noske, Ferdinand H	Schramm, Norman W	Wetzstein, Werner F	Dager, Janice E
O Neal, Patrick E	Schroeder, Donald K	White, Donald E	Dickerson, Joe B
Oestmann, Vernon E	Schroeder, Lambert H	Wiebold, Raymond E	Dobberfuhl, Walter F
Ortiz, Luis E	Schubert, Gary T	Wild, F William	Doepke, Konrad H
Parker, Noel Sean	Schubkegel, Theodore V	Wildgrube, Paul F G	Dosien, Robert P
Parsons, Daniel C	Schueler, Dennis R	Winkler, Wilbert D	Dowding, Robert E
Patzwitz, Walter F	Schultz, Arthur L	Wise, William G	Dumler, Marvin J
Paul, Lawrence W	Schultz, William F	Wolf, Erhard W	Eberhard, Louis C
Pauling, Clarence H	Schulz, Donald C	Wolfram, James T	Eggerding, Roland F
Perez, Angel L	Schulze, Paul E	Wunderlich, Lewis H	Ehlers, Jane L
Petersen, Robert L	Schutt, Charles K	Yosief, Haile	Eichstaedt, Esther Lydia D.
Peterson, Gerald R	Schwartzkopf, Elmer J	Younce, Loring	Engbrecht, Franklin E
Pickett, Arthur	Shonholz, Robert F	Young, Dale G	Fiala, Maxine M
Piepenbrink, Willis R	Sievers, Philip W*	Zadeik, Peter A	Fichtner, Allen G*
Pinta, Robert John	Singleton, William David	Zander, Glenn R	Fischer, Junior P*
Pohl, Wayne A	Sittmann, Gustav E	Zehnder, Ronald R	Fricke, Raymond W
Pool, Charles H	Snow, Charles Michael	Zeile, Theodore A	Friedrich, Karen Lee
Preus, Klemet I	Snow, Edward E	Zimmerman, Paul A	Froehlich, Judith A
Preuss, Gerald F	Sorenson, James H	Zipay, Nicholas	Fuchs, Arthur H
Quebe, Stanley A	Stahlke, Leonard E	Zschiegner, Arthur H	Gabler, Frank H
Quiram, A Gerald	Stamm, Richard E	Zschiegner, Max C E	Giles, Jack Lane
Radloff, Roy T	Starck, Craig Herbert	Zuberbier, Orlan G	Goehner, Loren H
Raedeke, Norman L	Steenbock, Elmer G	Zuhn, Donald W*	Groerich, Deborah Jean
Rahn, James Elwood	Steyer, Edward A		Haak, Diane V
Rasmussen, Ervin B	Still, Wayman L		Hackbarth, Oscar *

Haertling, Clinton O	Maynard, John E	Schultze, Thomas E
Hall, Belinda J	Mc Namar, Terria	Schwanke, Wayne L
Hardt, Peggy L	Meyer, Loma R	Seboldt, Franklin O
Harms, Helmuth H	Meyer, Theodore H	Senechal, George D*
Harvan, Jamie Sue	Mieger, Paul Alan	Sengele, Mary Ann
Heibel, Daniel R	Miller, Lloyd L*	Sengele, Richard C
Heideman, Harlan G*	Moody, Carl A	Sheldon, Ernest L
Heinecke, Norma Frieda*	Morrison, Terry L	Sipe, D Elaine
Heinicke, Theodore G	Morse, Hilary I	Smallbeck, Ann Carolin
Helge, Erich E	Mueller, Albert F*	Stefan, Matthew Jason
Hentzen, Patsy A	Mueller, Mary A	Stevens, Joanne M
Hillman, Velma L	Naber, Darrell H	Stohs, Reuben V
Hilst, Helen M	Nafzger, Carroll W	Straub, Carl G
Hinrichs, Edmund C	Nahnsen, Thomas F	Strong, Barbara N
Holschen, Howard H	Neben, Wilbur C	Thies, Ruth E
Holste, Herman M	Nickolai, Michael	Thompson, Corinne R
Hoover, Hoyle Leon	Nieting, Robert E	Thompson, Judy Carol
Huhner, Margaret R	Odean, Walter H	Thurn, David G
Kamprath, Victor M	Oehlerking, Lawrence E	Trautmann, Martha Jean
Keiser, Pamela Marie	Pargee, Helene Theresa	Trusheim, Robert H
Kemp, Margaret	Peter, Marilyn J	Van Pelt, Carla N
Keuer, Edward J	Pickelmann, Henry M	Von Fange, Erich A
Killen, James R*	Pieper, Robert W	Walwick, Paul A
Klammer, Werner C	Pingel, Nancy Ann	Watt, Lois J
Klein, Paula C	Porisch, Byron D	Weniger, Richard L
Kleinschmidt, Marlene A	Rausch, Richard O	Wentland, Katherine Marie
Knoll, Martin A	Rawlins, Gary R	Wenz, Richard L
Knudson, Ella R	Reimann, Andrew K	Whitaker, Angela Youngman
Koerschen, James M	Reitz, Edward W	Wilbert, Warren N
Kohrs, Ralph L	Richard, Helen R	Willis, Linda J
Krass, Robert J	Richert, Alvin M	Winter, Paul G
Lange, Robert Earl	Richert, Fay R	Wischmeier, Wanda L
Lebrecht, Richard F	Richter, Edgar Roy	Witkop, Myrtha S
Leeland, Carlene L*	Roedel, Martin O	Wolbrecht, Cheryl K
Leimer, Walter B	Ruff, Elaine Kathleen	Wondrasch, Ruth M
Leitzke, Martin W	Saeger, Lyle W*	Wudy, Laureen Alice
Looock, William Carl	Schlie, Linda S	Wuggazer, Dorothy E
Loomans, Keith A	Schmidt, Karl W*	Zobel, Marlin J
Luehmann, Lloyd L	Schneider, Betty J	
Luehrs, Irene *	Schoepp, Leonard H	
Macke, Thomas E*	Schroeder, Leland P	
Mathers, Richard C	Schultz, Lloyd N	

*Deceased prior to March 2013,
but information received too late
to be included in prior list.

OFFICER, BOARD, AND COMMISSION REPORTS

R1.3

Church Relations

The Call to Serve World Lutheranism

In my last report to the convention about World Lutheranism, I noted the “tectonic shift” occurring as Western church bodies in Europe and North America continue to move away from the Holy Scriptures in support of positions that reflect the society rather than the historic church. These trends continue. Churches in the Global South continue to look for partners who uphold the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures and who practice historic Christianity. This has caused many churches in the Global South to seek instruction and assistance from the Missouri Synod.

The past three years have been marked by discussions of “socio-ethical concerns.” In plain language, socio-ethical concerns deal with the issues of marriage, family, and homosexuality. The position of churches such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and the Church of Sweden, as well as organizations such as the Lutheran World Federation, is that socio-ethical concerns are contextual and cultural rather than addressed by the Holy Scriptures. In clear language, these church bodies and organizations are “instructing” the church bodies of the Global South that same-sex marriage and the acceptance of practicing homosexual clergy has more to do with cultural acceptance, justice, and rights than it does with doctrine. As these churches and organizations attempt to reeducate the churches of the Global South, who are socially conservative and who uphold the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, with a new hermeneutic that seeks to reinterpret the Scriptures to agree with a Western social agenda, the churches of the Global South have been requesting theological education, seminars, and missionaries to help them resist these forces.

The Missouri Synod continues to work among the big three African Lutheran churches—totaling approximately 20 million members—found in Ethiopia, Madagascar, and Tanzania. Although not historic partners, nor in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Missouri Synod, these churches are seeking clear teaching about the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions from us. The task is immense, as are the opportunities for world Lutheranism. As a result, efforts such as the Global Seminary Initiative, which seeks to provide training for future church leaders as well as offering seminars to address these issues, are even more crucial today than three years ago.

The International Lutheran Council (www.ilc-online.org), of which the Missouri Synod is a founding member, has become a more significant and helpful organization to church bodies seeking a scriptural and historically Christian approach in facing the challenges presented by other Western church bodies. The International Lutheran Council (ILC) is currently developing a strategic plan to be more helpful to world Lutheranism as it seeks to expand its membership in the coming years. The ILC conferences have become valuable not only for the teaching provided, but also for the mutual conversation of the brethren from around the world. We look with hope toward the future when the ILC can do even more.

The Old Latin School (<http://thewittenbergproject.org>) in Wittenberg, Germany, is operating and serving as a beacon bearing witness to the Holy Scriptures and the faith held by the “Old Lutherans” in Germany and beyond. The center is symbolic of the Missouri Synod’s engagement with world Lutheranism, and it serves as a place where conferences can be held on the important issues facing the Lutheran church today, as well as a potential headquarters for the ILC. The center also will be a part of the Missouri Synod’s Reformation 2017 celebration.

In the past triennium, the Missouri Synod held conversations with several church bodies for fellowship and will seek altar and pulpit fellowship with five or six additional church bodies at this convention.

The Missouri Synod is the largest Lutheran church in the world that holds to the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures and unreservedly accepts the teachings found in The Book of Concord. Because of our position, many church bodies around the world are streaming to the Missouri Synod so that we can share the gift the Lord has so graciously bestowed to us. By helping to strengthen, encourage, and support Lutheran churches around the world, we ourselves become stronger as we look forward to the day when these churches may help us with the tremendous opportunity of immigrant missions within our own country. “Upon this Rock,” the Lord builds His church worldwide.

Albert B. Collver, *Director of Church Relations-Assistant to the President*

R1.4

KFUO

Worldwide KFUE

As the “Official Broadcast Voice” of the LCMS, the mission of KFUE is to reach a worldwide audience with the Good News message of Jesus Christ crucified and risen for the forgiveness of sins.

KFUE Reaches the World

With God’s blessing, the national and international reach of Worldwide KFUE, “The Messenger of Good News,” continues to grow. Our radio programs, live streaming, and on-demand audio, along with our podcasts, have been heard by listeners in all 50 states and 138 countries. Our website and radio programs were accessed over 735,000 times in 2015, and those listeners receive Worldwide KFUE via devices such as our Android phone app, the LCMS app, wi-fi radios, tablets, computers, and a variety of other devices for live web stream and on-demand listening. KFUE is followed by over 4,000 Facebook friends, and our iPhone app has 7,300 users.

Leadership Change

In May 2015, Rev. Rod Zwonitzer retired and Mr. Gary Duncan was appointed as the director of broadcast services for KFUE. DCE Andy Bates was called to be the KFUE director of programming. The KFUE management team also includes Joan Harwell, director of development, and Buzz Ullrich, operations director. Gary, the management team, and the staff are excited about the direction, growth, and future of Worldwide KFUE.

A Radio Milestone

In 2014, KFUE celebrated its 90th year of broadcasting on AM 850 in the St. Louis, Missouri, radio market. The KFUE AM 850 terrestrial signal reaches thousands of listeners each day within a 100-mile radius of St. Louis. Many of those reached via AM 850 have been lifelong listeners and supporters of Worldwide KFUE.

Development and Underwriters

KFUE radio is listener supported and depends on the generous gifts from our listeners. In 2015, we launched our new “Embrace the Future” KFUE legacy campaign. KFUE also receives support from our underwriter partners. Our list of underwriters continues to grow each year. These underwriters include Ad Crucem, Agnus Dei Liturgical Arts, Concordia Historical Institute, Concordia University Wisconsin, Luther Academy, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Lutheran Heritage Foundation, Lutheran High School Association, Lutheran Haven, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran Senior Services, Mid-American Coaches, Office of National Missions, and several more expected in 2016.

Worldwide Radio Programs

As KFUE continues to develop its current broadcast offerings, we have added several new programs to our lineup since 2013. These new programs include “Thy Strong Word,” “The Student Union,” “Cross Defense,” “Concord Matters,” a joint effort with the LCMS Communications Department titled “Free to be Faithful,” and our first foreign language program, “Cristo para Todos,” in Portuguese. This program is a KFUE-produced program in partnership with the radio station of the Brazilian Lutheran Church.

Worldwide KFUE continues to be the “Messenger of Good News,” a voice in the wilderness.

Gary Duncan, *Executive Director*

R2

First Vice-President

The vice-presidents of the Synod are elected to advise the President of the Synod, to serve on the Council of Presidents, and to form, under the President, the Praesidium of the Synod. Upon his request or as provided by the Synod, the vice-presidents assist the President in carrying out his responsibilities and represent him as needed.

The First Vice-President serves as a full-time executive and a non-voting member of the Synod’s Board of Directors. He is responsible at all times to the President of the Synod for the performance of his duties.

During the triennium the undersigned has been blessed with the opportunity to work with many individuals and groups throughout the Synod. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- President of the Synod and his staff as a member of the President’s team
- Secretary of the Synod
- Council of Presidents
- Board of Directors of the Synod
- Commission on Theology and Church Relations
- Chair the Colloquy Committees of the Synod
- Member of the Task Force responding to 2013 Resolution 4-06A on Licensed Lay Deacons
- Chairman of the Task Force responding to 2013 Resolution 5-14A on Routes to Ministry
- Convener of the planning group preparing for the Fiscal Conference in September 2015
- Participated in meetings with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod
- Convention Planning Committee
- Continued to lead the Koinonia Project, including facilitating a Koinonia retreat for the Council of Presidents
- Led several pastors’ retreats for the Koinonia Project
- Facilitated ongoing meetings between the pastors of the Atlantic and Wyoming districts for the Koinonia Project
- Board for National Mission
- Presidents and faculties of both seminaries
- Function as secretary of the Praesidium
- Work with the editor of the circuit Winkel Bible study series sponsored by the Praesidium
- Spoke at several pastoral conferences
- Represented the President at 15 district conventions
- Represented the President in 18 district visitations
- Gave counsel to many district presidents
- Regional meetings of the district presidents
- PALS Steering Committee

- Synod Prison Ministry Conference
- Preaching in various congregations around the Synod
- Conducted various installations at the International Center
- Attended Mega Church Conference
- Attended Doxology Conference

The Praesidium, which includes the President and First Vice-President of the Synod, together with the five regional vice-presidents, met regularly for prayer, Bible study, and discussion of Synod matters, usually in conjunction with a meeting of the Council of Presidents. The Praesidium gave counsel on a variety of matters as requested by the President of the Synod, district presidents and others.

The First Vice-President serves as chairman of both the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry and the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry, the reports of which follow in this *Convention Workbook*. By means of colloquy, the Lord of the Church provides for the congregations of the Synod many qualified commissioned ministers and ordained pastors.

The President and his staff often consult with me or ask me to work with individuals or groups requesting information regarding ecclesiastical supervision issues in the districts. We always seek to help and support the district presidents in their necessary work. The undersigned managed the process of providing for circuit exceptions in the preparations for the 2016 Synod Convention.

During the triennium, the First Vice-President visited with members of the faculties of both seminaries, spoke at various professional church worker conferences, preached at a number of congregations across the Synod, and addressed a variety of groups within the Synod. He attended the LCEF Fall Leadership Conferences and 15 district conventions and wrote various pieces for the Witness, Mercy, Life Together blog sponsored by the President’s Office (WMLTblog.org). The undersigned continues to lead the Koinonia Project, information for which can be found at www.lcms.org/koinoniaproject.

To speak personally, it is both a privilege and a joy to serve with President Matthew Harrison, together with the Praesidium, other Synod officers, and the Council of Presidents. I have worked with a number of ministry teams in my service in the Synod. All have been good, but this team is the best. The President and all the members of his staff, especially my executive assistant, Mrs. Brenda Schreder, are all gifts of God and a pleasure to work with. I look forward to each day to serve the Lord with them and for you, the members of the Synod, in this capacity. The Lord Jesus blesses our beloved Synod with rich resources and faithful servants.

Herbert C. Mueller Jr., *First Vice-President*

R2.1

Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry

The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry includes the First Vice-President of the Synod as chairman *ex officio* (the undersigned), the presidents of the two seminaries (or their representatives), and one district president elected by the Council of Presidents. Committee membership was stable this triennium: Dr. Lawrence Rast, President of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne; Dr. Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; President Timothy Scharr of the Southern Illinois District, re-elected by the Council of Presidents. All three served faithfully the entire triennium.

The Bylaws of the Synod (Bylaw section 3.10.2) provide the general outline of the Pastoral Colloquy Program. Most of the policy details are included in a policy manual, however, accessible on the Synod website at <http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=1106>. An electronic version of the colloquy application is available at the same location.

Several adjustments were made to the application form during this triennium. Two theological essays of 1500–1800 words each are now required (one on the Six Chief Parts of the Catechism and the other on basic Lutheran theological terms) in order to provide more initial information to the committee as we evaluate applications. The essays also give the committee more specific direction as to what needs to be discussed in the interview.

There are three categories of men eligible to apply for colloquy into the ministerium of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: (1) ordained pastors with sufficient education who are presently actively serving a congregation of another synod, who desire to colloquize into the LCMS (normally, we seek to have them bring their congregation along with them into the Synod, but that is not always possible); (2) men who are graduates of a seminary program of sufficient academic standards leading to ordination who have been members of LCMS congregations for at least two years (often, these are men who have resigned from pastoral positions in congregations of other synods and have subsequently joined LCMS congregations); and (3) licensed deacons of the Synod's districts who have served in the full Word and Sacrament ministry of an LCMS congregation under license for at least 10 years. The congregation he is serving must also certify that it desires to call the individual once he is certified. The Colloquy Committee is empowered by the Bylaws and the policy manual, at the request of the sponsoring district president, to make some exceptions to the minimum requirements in categories 2 and 3. All others, including commissioned ministers of the Synod, are directed to the alternate route programs at one of our Synod's seminaries.

During the previous triennium as well as the first part of the present triennium, the committee received a number of applications for colloquy from lifelong LCMS Lutherans and/or commissioned ministers who had received Master of Divinity degrees from non-Lutheran seminaries, sometimes locally, sometimes online. As a result of interviews conducted with many of these men, the committee decided, as a matter of policy, that such men will normally be directed to the alternate route at one of our seminaries instead of proceeding through colloquy. In the committee's experience, because such men often needed extensive coursework to bring them up to the confessional standards of our Synod, the committee felt it simpler to direct them to the seminary so that the seminary might design an appropriate alternate route for them.

During the course of the triennium, the Colloquy Committee met 4–5 times per year to examine applications, conduct interviews with applicants (no applicant is ever certified without a personal interview), and to transact business monitoring the progress of the various applicants. In the work of interviewing applicants, the committee often draws upon other ordained men from the staff of the Synod for help. Several Spanish-speaking pastors assist with Hispanic applicants. The Korean Ministry Pastoral Conference—an informal group of Korean-speaking LCMS pastors, together with Dr. Shang Ik Moon of Concordia University, Irvine—conducts classes in Lutheran theology for Korean speakers ordained elsewhere who wish to colloquize into the Synod. These men are interviewed every January by the Chairman of the Colloquy Committee, together with Dr. Moon and others, and then presented to the full committee at a subsequent meeting. During the triennium now ending, 11 men were certified through this Korean colloquy program. In addition, as of this writing, a total of 46 men were certified by the normal process during the present triennium, for a total of 57 men certified for call and placement in the ministerium of the Synod. A total of 88 men (11 Korean and 77 regular) applied for colloquy during this period. Of that total, 19 were declined or withdrew and 27 are still in process as of this writing (a few from the previous triennium).

As we look to the future, there will be more men coming from a wide variety of backgrounds, both within our country and from around the world. Colloquy has always been a part of our life together as a Synod and will always be a necessary and valued route to the pastoral office in the LCMS. Should the Synod adopt the proposals of Task Force 4-06A, the workload of the Colloquy Committee will be significantly increased as we put in place, under the supervision of the committee, regional colloquy committees to interview licensed lay deacons who will be required to apply for colloquy to the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) roster. As always, we trust God to grant both strength and wisdom for the task. It is the belief of the undersigned that in the future, the Synod should give the Colloquy Committee the discretion to decide whether a licensed deacon applying for colloquy should be put on the roster as a “general pastor” or as an SMP pastor.

To conclude, the men who apply for colloquy come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Many come from other Lutheran churches here and abroad. Others were ordained in churches of other confessions but have been attracted to the truth of the confession our Synod holds. All are thoroughly examined and, where necessary, given more work to do to prepare for service in our Synod (often including further interviews and examination), so that when the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry certifies them for call and placement they are, to the best of our knowledge, fully ready to serve in our midst as faithful Lutheran pastors. We thank God for these gifts to His church, many of whom have come to us at great personal cost. Even though they may have been trained in another church body, they come because they are convinced by the Scriptures of the truth of our confession and are willing to commit themselves to that confession in order to carry out ministry in our midst as faithful Lutheran pastors. To God be the glory!

Herbert C. Mueller Jr., *First Vice-President, Chairman*

R2.2

Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry

The 2013 *Handbook* of the Synod provides for the following representatives on the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry:

The First Vice-President of the Synod as chairman (the undersigned)

A representative of the Concordia University System (Dr. Paul Philp)

Two college/university presidents appointed by the President of the Synod (Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich and Rev. Dr. Patrick Ferry)

Two CUS faculty involved in colloquy appointed by the president of the Concordia University System (Dr. Rebecca Peters and Prof. Kevin Borchers)

One representative from CUEnet (Dr. Heather Stueve)

The Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry met several times by telephone or email and one time face-to-face during the triennium. The normal day-to-day work of colloquy for commissioned ministry takes place at the districts, the individual institutions of the CUS and CUEnet, though every application for commissioned ministry colloquy must pass through the office of the First Vice-President for his signature.

The major work of the committee in its face-to-face meeting (January 2015) was to approve revisions to the “Policy Manual for Colloquy into the Commissioned Ministry.” The directors for the Director of Christian Education programs of the various CUS schools had made suggestions for adjustments in the policies for several of the programs. The committee also spent considerable time reviewing the version of the policy manual prepared in the previous triennium and making necessary editorial changes.

One specific change is worthy of note: after significant discussion of the need for teacher licensure for teacher colloquy applicants, the committee voted to indicate in the manual the possibility of granting

exceptions on an individual basis to the prerequisite of eligibility for state licensure for teacher colloquy applicants. The pertinent policy now reads as follows:

5.1.1.3.2 Other exceptions to the requirement for eligibility for teacher licensure may be granted on an individual basis by the Colloquy Committee for Commissioned Ministry upon the recommendation of the teacher colloquy program director of the CUS institution through which the applicant is seeking certification.

This is not offering another option, but rather providing opportunity for exceptions to be made on the basis of the merits of each individual case. The full policy manual may be accessed on the Synod website at <http://www.lcms.org/colloquy-ministers-of-religion-commissioned>.

The Concordia University System provides for the preparation of candidates for certification for call and placement as ministers of religion—commissioned. CUEnet is the organization within the CUS national office authorized to deliver instruction for colloquy. All approvals come from the academic institution. The Committee oversees the colloquy process, but most of the actual work is handled by CUEnet and the Concordia University System. The Committee itself deals with policies as well as exceptions and difficult cases.

How many people are involved in colloquy through CUEnet? As of late 2014, approximately 620 people were enrolled in CUEnet colloquy courses. A total of 1,174 men and women have completed colloquy courses through CUEnet since its inception in 2001. There are currently about 10,600 nonrostered teachers in our schools—early childhood, elementary, and secondary schools (48 percent are LCMS members). There is therefore a great need for the efforts of CUEnet.

We are thankful for CUEnet and for the people who oversee the program and teach the courses, particularly its director, Dr. Heather Stueve, but most of all we are thankful for the people who have been presented to the church as commissioned ministers, gifts of Christ, by this process. It is a pleasure to serve the Synod by chairing this committee and working with these people. To God be the glory!

Herbert C. Mueller Jr., *First Vice-President, Chairman*

R2.3

Koinonia Project

Three years ago, we reported that the “Koinonia Project” is a *long-term* initiative of the President’s Office under the Constitution of the Synod, Art. XI B 3, which enjoins the President to “conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod.” *Koinonia* is the Greek word meaning “communion,” “partnership,” or “participation together” in something. Spiritually, *koinonia* in the New Testament is always something that the living Lord Jesus Himself works through His Means of Grace. We do not create *koinonia*, but by the grace of God in Christ we live in it and recognize it by the “marks of the church,” namely, the Gospel purely preached and the Sacraments rightly administered (Apology VII and VIII).

The project fosters *theological study and discussion groups at many levels* designed to bring together capable and respected people to study God’s Word and the Confessions of our church so that, by God’s grace, we come to clear agreement on (1) the points at issue; (2) what we confess together; (3) what we reject, and (4) what we will therefore do together on the basis of Scripture and our Confessions. We have chosen to call this effort to develop spiritual and theological solutions to our difficulties the “Koinonia Project” because we pray that God will build and strengthen our unity in the Word of God, that is, our “koinonia” together.

During the 2010–2013 triennium, we were developing the basic concepts and running several pilot efforts. As will be explained below, during the present triennium, under my leadership as First

Vice-President, along with Rev. Randy Golter (special assistant to the President), we sought to broaden and deepen the effort across many areas of the Synod. We are the first to say that much more needs to be done for this long-term effort.

2013 Synod Convention

At the 2013 Convention, the Synod wholeheartedly supported the Koinonia Project by passing Res. 3-01A, which, among other things, resolved to (1) encourage widespread support for the project, (2) develop a website, (3) form three theological study groups in the Council of Presidents, (4) encourage circuit winkel meetings to use the Koinonia Project, and (5) involve more church workers and laity at all levels of the Synod in the project (2013 *Proceedings*, p. 115). How have we done? How has God blessed our efforts?

Again, this is a decades-long initiative. As will be shown below, however, support and participation is increasing such that the President has assigned one of his assistants, Rev. Randy Golter, to assist me with the project. Koinonia materials are available on the Synod website at www.lcms.org/koinoniaproject. Many more resources need to be written and added to this site. We continue to encourage participation at the circuit level and have conducted presentations and retreats to that end.

Council of Presidents

One of the most helpful efforts thus far has been the participation of the Council of Presidents. Res. 3-01A mandated that the Council form (by blind draw) three study groups, both to lead by example and to provide a forum for the members of the COP to work toward greater unity on the council. The three groups were formed in November 2013. The council began with a Koinonia Retreat at its February 2014 meeting. At nearly every meeting since then, the council has been engaged in theological discussion around some of the issues that bring friction among us. One group discussed admission to the Lord’s Supper, another the “communicant as confessor,” and the third group focused on the role of the laity in the mission of the church. There are no statements prepared by these groups yet, but the council has been drawn closer together in the process.

Since the publication of the report of the Res. 4-06A Task Force on licensed lay deacons, the Council has held, within the three Koinonia groups and in plenary, extensive discussion of the proposal to require deacons licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry as *de facto* pastors to undergo colloquy to the SMP roster. While not completely unanimous, as of this writing a broad consensus has developed that if the church sends a man regularly to preach and administer the Sacraments, he needs either to be ordained or en route to ordination. Future meetings will certainly entail more work on this topic.

Atlantic and Wyoming Districts

One quite public effort with respect to the Koinonia Project has been the joint efforts of the Atlantic and Wyoming District pastoral conferences. The two districts held a joint pastoral conference (supported, in part, by a Thrivent grant) in May 2014 in New York City, led by myself and Chaplain William Weedon of our staff. A second conference involving the same groups took place in September 2015 in Cheyenne, Wyoming. In February 2016, five representatives from each district met for discussion and to chart a course forward, thanks also to the leadership of the two new district presidents, John Hill of Wyoming and Derek Lecakes from Atlantic. Each district has asked questions of the other for clarification. Each district will discuss how to answer and will come back together at a future date under the blessing of God. There are many challenges, but both districts are quite committed to continuing the conversation.

Other District Efforts

Three years ago, we reported on several other districts that had begun or were considering Koinonia efforts. The Nebraska District has several regional efforts under way. Northern Illinois began with one group that met for two years and has now expanded to form four groups. They have shared statements with their district pastoral conferences that have proven helpful. South Wisconsin developed two groups, one to work on worship issues and the other to discuss admission to the Lord's Supper. Both groups have come to greater agreement under the Word of God. Recently, I was able to present on the Koinonia Project to the circuit visitors of the North and South Wisconsin Districts meeting jointly. Several circuits in Texas, Kansas, and Ohio have engaged in ongoing discussions.

The Minnesota South District has developed several regional groups that have, by most accounts, brought greater calm and peace to the district. They are on hiatus at present but plan to take up the process again next year. In Minnesota North, a divided circuit has sought to use the approach outlined in the concept paper. The North Dakota District invited me to lead the pastoral conference in a retreat to help each circuit develop as a Koinonia study group. I was also able to lead a retreat with the circuit visitors and vice-presidents from the Mid-South and Oklahoma Districts so that they might bring the effort to their circuit winks.

In January 2016, Pastor Randy Golter and I led the pastors of Southeastern District Circuit 18 (encompassing most of South Carolina) in a 48-hour Koinonia Retreat. This has helped these brothers to develop a healthier approach to the concerns that they have with one another.

Think Tank Results

On January 9–10, 2015, we brought together most of the people who have been involved in leading Koinonia study groups across the Synod for a think tank in St. Louis. Everywhere the Koinonia Project has been used, we have developed approaches uniquely appropriate to each situation. Here are some of the things we have learned through our pilot projects (in no particular order), as reported at this event:

- Building relationships and trust is vital.
- It may (probably will) take time to develop the relationships necessary. (God gives trust through study of His Word.)
- Pastors do desire in-depth theological discussion and intensive theological study in a safe environment.
- Pastors need to learn to study better together. Find a way to help the group hear the Word of God together on an equal basis.
- Worship and prayer helps keep everyone on an equal level.
- Each person needs to tell their story and then be asked how they came to their position, followed by a time for questions and answers.
- Participants need to allow themselves to be vulnerable as they discuss the realities of ministry.
- A Code of Conduct is important—hold one another accountable.
- Spend time in specific prayer.
- Benefits of affirming, unifying statements.
- It is helpful to have a product, showing where do we agree, what we reject, where we disagree.
- Admit faulty assumptions of one another.
- Distinction between ecclesiastical supervision and Koinonia process needs to be maintained.
- Overnight two-day retreat is key to beginning. Covenant/code of conduct at retreat.
- “When brothers sit down with open Scriptures, open Confessions, open ears and minds and mouths open in prayers, we really do make some progress.”
- The spiritual must be primary. This is a spiritual, not academic, journey.
- Role of repentance is essential.

- Continual emphasis on what the Koinonia Project is and what it isn't; it will take time to drive home what it is and what the end game is or is not.
- Attraction, never coercion. Small behaviors add up.
- In-depth study of the Word together is crucial.
- Be vulnerable about your ministry. Have to be honest about what influences you.
- Understand the context for one another's ministry.
- Facilitators are crucial to provide safe places.
- What are the idols that need to be bashed behind the issues?
- Deal with Internet use.
- Have to be both organized and organic—some organization, but has to grow locally.
- Study focused on Scripture and Confessions.
- Renewed faith in the efficacy of the Word of God.

Following are some of the topics that are being discussed in the groups, as reported by the think tank:

- Theology and practice of worship
- Admission to the Lord's Supper (Ancillary issue: does the Supper create oneness, or is oneness needed to celebrate the Supper together?)
- How to teach preparation for the Lord's Supper
- Pastoral office and the priesthood of the baptized
- Wedding policies and practices
- Have to deal with AC VII—What is the Church? What is the Gospel? The “it is enough” for the unity of the Church that the Gospel be purely preached and the Sacraments rightly administered. What is the extent of the agreement necessary?
- Unionism and syncretism

Future Needs

What needs to happen for the future? The think tank offered the following:

- Sample covenants and facilitator training.
- Demonstrate a variety of expressions of Koinonia with a wide variety of examples of how this might work.
- Delivery systems will vary—through district, one circuit to the next.
- Study of the Augsburg Confession, especially Article VII.
- Confessional subscription sounds threatening to some. Need to show how it is a joy to be committed to this way of doing ministry.
- Develop a list of resources available for study.
- How do we continue to make Koinonia a spiritual journey? Focus on the Word for repentance and faith.
- In facilitator training, emphasize that we need to talk from Scripture. We need to be sure that Scripture is heard and is at the center of our conversation.
- District presidents are a resource individually—each one knows his district. Consult with district president regarding which resources to use.

Conclusion

Much more needs to be done to follow through on these suggestions. We pray that the Koinonia Project can grow as we broaden into still more parts of the Synod and, where it has taken root, help it grow deeper and stronger. We need more resources (especially Bible studies) and ways to share results and approaches across the Synod. We have been very careful with what is reported on the Synod website because of the generally confidential nature of the specific things discussed within the groups. The Council of Presidents has been very engaged during this triennium. This needs to continue, but we need to engage the seminary faculties much more as well.

In summary, the Koinonia Project cannot become a political process but must remain a spiritual effort centered in the Word of God,

repentance and forgiveness, prayer and charity. We must be prepared to work on this for a generation. We pray together for a deeper understanding of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions as they apply to the issues troubling us. Could the Holy Spirit use the Word of God in this effort to bring about a cultural shift, that is, a change in our expectations of one another? Yes! God help us toward that end!

Herbert C. Mueller Jr., *First Vice-President*

R3

Praesidium

The vice-presidents of the Synod are elected to advise the President of the Synod, to serve on the Council of Presidents, and to form, under the President, the Praesidium of the Synod. The First Vice-President is nominated and elected by the whole Synod. Vice-presidents two through six are nominated within the regions of the Synod, but are elected by the whole Synod in convention. At the present time, the Praesidium includes the following:

President Matthew C. Harrison, St. Louis, MO.

First Vice-President Herbert C. Mueller Jr., Waterloo, IL.

Second Vice-President Dr. John C. Wohlrabe Jr., Milwaukee, WI, representing the Great Lakes Region.

Third Vice-President Daniel Preus, St. Louis, MO, representing the Central Region.

Fourth Vice-President Dr. Scott R. Murray, Houston, TX, representing the West-Southwest Region.

Fifth Vice-President Nabil S. Nour, Sioux Falls, SD, representing the Great Plains Region.

Sixth Vice-President Christopher S. Esget, Alexandria, VA, representing the East-Southeast Region.

The Rev. Dr. Robert Kuhn of Oviedo, FL, had been elected by the 2013 Synod in convention as Sixth Vice-President. Dr. Kuhn had served in that capacity until July 2015, when, due to reasons of health, he resigned from that position. Following the procedure outlined in Bylaw 3.3.2.4, President Harrison appointed Pastor Christopher S. Esget of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA, to fill out the unexpired term.

Upon his request, or as provided by the Synod, the vice-presidents assist the President in carrying out his responsibilities and represent him as needed. The Praesidium as such met regularly (generally in conjunction with a meeting of the Council of Presidents) for prayer, Bible study, discussion of Synod matters, and to give counsel on a variety of issues as requested by the President of the Synod, district presidents, and others. The undersigned serves as secretary of the Praesidium.

During the triennium, the vice-presidents helped with the visitation of the Concordia University System, advised the President and First Vice-President on the Koinonia Project, assisted in making sure a representative of the Synod was present for all of the 35 district conventions, and provided consultation to the President regarding nominations for the Commission on Constitutional Matters.

The major project involving the members of the Praesidium this triennium was the district visitation process mandated by 2013 Resolution 7-01A. Every district president and district board of directors was visited by the President or First Vice-President together with the regional vice-president (where possible) for that district. These visits generally encompassed two or three days of conversation and presentation with district presidents and boards of directors, often including as well the circuit visitors of the district. Our purpose in visiting was to hear the leaders of the districts describe the blessings, opportunities, and challenges God has given to each district. We also brought information from the national office and discussed matters of mutual concern. Though they involved a significant investment of

time and resources, the visits have been universally well received and beneficial for all concerned.

The Praesidium is responsible for a series of Bible studies prepared for circuit pastoral conferences. For the past couple of years, we have been working with the theme “Words of Life for the Church and for the World,” taking up various theological terms. The Church is created and lives by words—specific words, true words, and every one of them God’s Words. As Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away” (Luke 21:33). The Church is commissioned to bring life to the world through God’s Words, so that people may be baptized into eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ and be taught to treasure and observe everything Jesus has commanded. These studies are funded through payments made each year by the districts and are available for free download at <http://www.lcms.org/resources/worship/biblestudies/winkel>. Pastor Mark Love of Trinity Lutheran Church in Toledo, OH, is the general editor.

It is both a pleasure and a privilege to serve the people of the Synod with the members of the Synod Praesidium. God be praised!

Herbert C. Mueller, Jr., *First Vice-President*

R4

Secretary

Duties and Responsibilities

The Office of the Secretary is a busy office, its duties detailed throughout the *Handbook* of the Synod. Included are corporate secretary responsibilities, convention preparation, dispute resolution administration, roster maintenance, and Council of Presidents and commission duties. Needless but important to say, carrying out these responsibilities would not be possible without the assistance of very dedicated executive assistant staff and volunteer help.

Assimilation of Department of Rosters, Statistics, and Research

The responsibilities of the Office of the Secretary were expanded significantly during the past triennium with the placement of the Department of Rosters, Statistics, and Research under the oversight of the Secretary of the Synod. This huge area of responsibility under the supervision of Senior Director Gene Weeke manages all of the statistical and membership information reported in *The Lutheran Annual* and on the Synod’s website, while also increasingly being called upon to conduct research for the Synod and its agencies.

In brief, *Rosters and Statistics* maintains the official rosters and statistics of LCMS congregations and church workers. It also provides list management services for the rosters of schools, congregational lay leaders, recognized service organizations, and LCMS high school and junior high school youth. Each year, Rosters and Statistics receives and updates all data for publishing *The Lutheran Annual*. Through electronic data sharing, information from this database is also published on the LCMS website and shared with districts, boards, and other approved organizations.

In brief, Research Services provides a full range of research and analysis services. Besides supporting the ministry offices and LCMS officers located in the International Center, it provides assistance to the seminaries, districts, and other entities. During the past triennium, Research Services made several process improvements that included the implementation of an advanced survey tool and mapping software to assist with the explanation and presentation of findings.

This assimilation of the Department of Rosters, Statistics, and Research into the Secretary’s Office has resulted in a natural and sensible relationship that facilitates cooperation and coordination.

Increased Convention Nomination and Election Responsibilities

Synodwide application of the restructuring decisions of the 2010 convention, including the preconvention election of the President of the Synod, the ballot nominating processes for elections of regional vice presidents and mission board members, and the transition to policy boards in place of program boards are largely in place. Look for continued fine tuning in some of the business to come before the 2016 convention.

The 2013 convention made several specific bylaw changes to the various nominations processes now in use by the Synod, which in turn have resulted in considerable additional labor by the Secretary's Office as it provides the preparatory work for the Committee for Convention Nominations. With the adoption of Res. 5-05A "To Amend Bylaws Regarding Boards of Regents and Concordia University System Board," Bylaws 3.10.5.2, 3.6.6.3, and 3.12.3.5 (d) have required the development of a procedure to review all Committee for Convention Nomination nominees for Concordia University System board positions to ascertain that they meet specific qualifications. The resolution additionally added a new paragraph (e) to Bylaw 3.12.3.5 that requires the same review for all nominees for all regional board positions, and the publishing in the *Convention Workbook* of a list of those found qualified to be available for possible nominations from the floor of the convention.

While the new bylaw requirements may turn out to be very beneficial, these and other changes have greatly increased the convention preparations workload of the Secretary's Office—all within some very demanding time frames. I believe it is time for the 2016 convention floor committee responsible for reviewing this report to propose the appointment of a Blue Ribbon Task Force to review the entire nominations and elections picture and propose a reasonable and more effective nominations process.

Dispute Resolution

The Synod is blessed to have in place dispute resolution processes that address dispute matters in a God-pleasing manner. As with any Christian endeavor, however, there is always reason to strive to make these processes the best that they can be. Coming before the convention will be a number of proposed bylaw changes to address areas found to be wanting or in need of clarification in the existing procedures.

One of those areas was addressed by the 2013 convention with Res. 7-18 "To Study Doctrinal Training for Reconcilers," which referred a perceived need for doctrinal training for the lay reconcilers to the Council of Presidents, CCM, and Secretary of the Synod "for appropriate study and recommendations."

After extensive discussions during the current triennium that included the Council of Presidents and CCM, as well as the Commission on *Handbook* and the reconcilers themselves during regional training meetings, it was generally agreed that providing such comprehensive doctrinal training would not be a reasonable solution. Instead, a proposal worthy of convention consideration has been submitted by the CCM that will provide opportunity for panel members to pursue assistance from knowledgeable resources and persons when serving on panels in cases that involve doctrinal issues.

Other Responsibilities

The Secretary of the Synod is privileged to serve as a voting member of the Board of Governors of Concordia Historical Institute. In recent years, the institute has endured some financial and other struggles, but it has weathered these storms, thanks in large part to the valiant and generous leadership provided by former Executive Director Larry Lumpe. And thanks to recent increased financial support allotted by the Board of Directors in the Synod's budget along

with special support from Concordia Publishing House, the institute's prospects for greater effectiveness and service under the leadership of its new director, Rev. Daniel Harmelink, have been greatly improved.

During the past three years, the President of the Synod appointed me to serve as his representative on the Board of Directors of Concordia Publishing House. Like its other synodwide corporate entities, the publishing house is a unique blessing to the Synod (*i.e.*, having its own publishing house to provide trustworthy printed and electronic materials for use in congregation and home, under leadership and administration that continues to weather the latest economic trends, winning the highest possible business awards in our land while producing some of the highest quality products to be found on bookshelves and computer apps anywhere).

In Conclusion

After 18 years of having the privilege of serving in this office, this time this report is indeed "in conclusion." I have appreciated very much my opportunity to serve our Synod as its Secretary. I look forward to helping my successor carry on the important work of the Secretary's Office.

Raymond L. Hartwig, *Secretary*

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. (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 made strides to improve its efficiency and effectiveness over the past three years. Implementation of a consent agenda for meetings occurred, which allowed for accepting in one motion a number of reports and noncontroversial action items that had previously been handled individually. In order to increase its effectiveness, the board engaged in a 10-hour retreat focused on "The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod of the Future." The time was spent laying the foundation for future discussions, with the identification of eight "next steps" for the board to consider. Additionally, the board engaged in a self-evaluation process to re-examine its collective and individual performance and identify plans for improvement.

To strengthen existing relationships, meetings were held between the chairman of the Board of Directors, the Chief Administrative Officer of the Synod, as well as the board chairmen and executives of Concordia Publishing House, the LCMS Foundation, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod, and Concordia Plan Services. The meetings were meant to encourage a mutually beneficial relationship and led to helpful discussions on the role of the Board of Directors in the work of Synod agencies as well as corporate Synod, enhancing the relationships between LCMS board members and agency board members, and identifying earlier such items that may come before the Board of Directors so that the board can be better prepared to provide informed assistance.

A number of election matters were addressed by the board, including the responsibility to review and approve the five regions into which LCMS districts are grouped. The board, acting jointly with the Council of Presidents, retained the same boundaries that were set three years ago.

The board has submitted a number of overtures to the 2016 convention. The first overture is to enable the board to carry out its responsibility of managing legal, property, and business matters in a more orderly manner. A second overture is intended to assure uniformity of relationship and asset disposition language in governing documents of corporate agencies of the Synod. A third overture will serve to clarify and confirm the distinction between Synod and corporate Synod and to provide consistency for the meaning of "Property of the Synod." A fourth overture proposes to revise and enhance the nomination and election process for regional members of the Board of Directors and the mission boards. Finally, we have proposed the formation of a Recognized Service Organization (RSO) Task Force to review the program and offer recommendations to the 2019 convention.

Financial Condition of the Synod

The Chief Financial Officer has reported that the Synod finished the 2013–14 fiscal year with a gain in unrestricted, undesignated net assets of about a half million dollars. The Chief Financial Officer reported that at the end of the 2014–15 fiscal year, the total assets of the Synod had decreased by approximately \$1.8 million, accompanied by a decrease in liabilities of \$5.2 million. Total revenues were \$64.1 million and expenses totaled \$63.6 million, resulting in a year-end surplus of \$.5 million. Ongoing deficit reduction efforts reversed slightly, largely due to the application of a new vacation-leave-accumulation policy. The Chief Financial Officer reported for the period ending November 2015 that receipts and spending compared to budget were largely falling within their norms for the current time in the fiscal year. More detailed information is provided in the report of the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod, below.

The board approved the distribution of \$944,065.06 in surplus funds from those budgeted for the 2013 LCMS convention. Of that surplus total, the board designated \$250,000 to meet costs arising in connection with the 2016 convention, \$494,000 for distribution back to LCMS districts, and the remainder toward funding the cost of convention-mandated task forces, study groups, or other activities.

National Office Compensation

The Board of Directors is responsible for determining the compensation of the employees of corporate Synod. In 2006, the board adopted a compensation philosophy that states: "*At the International Center of the LCMS, our compensation philosophy is simple: In striving to be good stewards of the dollars entrusted to us, we shall pay fair salaries in a fashion which rewards performance in order to be able to attract, motivate, and retain employees.*" Since that time, all positions are reviewed on an annual basis. Compensation may change from one year to the next based on position classification and performance. All corporate entities at the International Center (LCMS, LCMS Foundation, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, and Concordia Plan Services) use the same salary scale. The board approves the individual salaries of Synod officers as well as a salary pool for the corporate Synod staff each year, as appropriate.

Minutes of the Board of Directors

The minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors are available on the Synod's website. The board does hold open meetings, although parts of each meeting are conducted in executive session. Some items of business (e.g., legal, personnel) are, for obvious

reasons, conducted with only the members of the board involved. Thus, the minutes of these executive sessions are confidential.

The members of the Board of Directors express their sincere thanks to the Synod for the special privilege afforded them to serve the Lord and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Michael Kumm, *Chairman*

Report of the Chief Administrative Officer

The preponderance of the business, legal, and administrative responsibilities of the Board of Directors are carried out by Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the Synod, who serves as the board's Chief Operating Officer. During this past triennium, in addition to day-to-day business and management and other administrative responsibilities, the CAO spent focused time in three specific areas:

1. Review of Corporate Management Programs. We continue to work to identify opportunities to create greater operational efficiencies and controls in the administrative processes of the organization. A number of projects were undertaken or completed during the past triennium. They are summarized below.

Signature Authority: A complete review of signature authority, including account codes and personnel, was undertaken during the past triennium. This review focused on the administrative policies and procedures related to the delegation of signing authority for purchase orders, check requests, corporate credit cards, etc. As of July 1, 2014, every employee with authority to sign financial documents has submitted a revised signature specimen, which accompanies a list of account codes for which their signature is valid. A process is in place that requires all signatures to be on file with proper authorization before the accounts payable office is able to process any financial documentation. The system can be electronically updated and is being used on a real-time basis. In addition, a signature authority verification process is conducted annually, wherein department and organizational leadership review for accuracy all information that is then active.

Independent Contractors: In coordination with the Synod's general counsel, a series of independent-contractor agreement templates were developed and placed into production in order to assist the national office program leaders in procuring the services of individuals outside the organization. As a result of these efforts, a new process was implemented in FY14 that assures that (1) every engagement for personal services is identified and tracked; (2) departments submit a "contract builder" form that contains the details regarding the intended engagement; (3) this information is placed into a centralized process for contract development, including a thorough review of the request by administrative management units and legal counsel, as necessary.

Corporate Credit Cards and Expense Reimbursement: All credit-card and expense-reimbursement policies were updated and revised in October 2014. In addition, the Synod's corporate credit-card program was modified in January 2015 to include two cards: (1) the Travel Card, which is used for domestic and international travel-related expenses, and (2) the One Card (i.e., purchasing card), which is used for low-dollar purchases such as office supplies and conference registration fees.

Audits of the corporate credit-card program and the expense-reimbursement programs are conducted annually by LCMS internal auditors. Their October 2015 report states, "We believe the LCMS corporate credit card program is operating more efficiently and effectively than in previous years. ... For that, we commend the Accounting Department personnel responsible for developing and monitoring the corporate credit-card policies and related processes."

Online Amicus Briefs Directory: As the nation continues to see the legal and religious dialogues intersecting in state and federal courts, the LCMS is increasingly being sought out to provide its perspective on these issues. The LCMS joins certain amicus briefs for cases in which the outcome is likely to affect the church. Filing amicus briefs serves several purposes, such as providing helpful information to the court regarding a certain case; alerting the court to the ways in which the case may affect people outside of the parties involved; and raising media and citizen awareness of important issues. We believe it is important that

our constituents know we are speaking out on social and legal issues in which the LCMS has a relevant perspective to bring to the conversation. The officers of the Synod, along with LCMS general counsel, regularly review requests to participate as an *amicus curiae* (or friend of the court) in judicial proceedings in which legal questions are presented involving issues in which the Synod has an interest. Other situations present the opportunity for the Synod to become involved through or on behalf of a member congregation in addressing such issues before the courts.

As legislators and other decision-makers seek out the Missouri Synod's viewpoint on matters where increasingly secular social norms—and legislation mirroring those norms—likely will impact American Christians, a new Synod webpage offers key information for those interested. The webpage www.lcms.org/board/amicusbriefs provides summaries and related information on legal matters that could have implications for religious organizations, church workers, and congregation members.

2. Establishment of Foreign Entities. In order to execute our global mission strategy, it is increasingly necessary to register The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in foreign countries or create separate legal entities in foreign countries to carry out our ministries. This work is coordinated by the CAO's office, working with the Office of International Mission, LCMS general counsel, and local (in-country) counsel, as necessary. This strategy is focused on supporting the work of our international missionaries as well as protecting the interests of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

3. Operations Team. The 2010 convention established an Operations Team at the national office. 2013 Bylaw 3.5.2ff states, "The Operations Team 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 according to the triennial emphases adopted by conventions 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."

Throughout the triennium, this team has met monthly with a standard agenda that brings together the three leaders of the program, along with the administrative and financial units of the LCMS national office, 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.

The Chief Administrative Officer is administratively responsible for several service units operating under the authority of the Board of Directors. These units are comprised of dedicated individuals whose service to the Synod is more often measured in decades than in years. A brief overview of their responsibilities and activities follows.

Ronald P. Schultz, *Chief Administrative Officer*

The Department of Human Resources

Exemplary service in support of ministry and mission is the goal of the Department of Human Resources. We are blessed with this amazing challenge as we deliver the core human resource functions to the Synod and the corporate entities. The department is consummately focused on maintaining a caring and supportive work environment so that over 700 employees, both domestic and internationally deployed, may give their most effective service to the Lord.

The Department of Human Resources coordinates the development and administration of personnel policies, procedures, and supporting systems within and between boards, commissions, departments, and agencies of the Synod. The last triennium presented opportunity to concentrate on the developmental needs of employees. Predicated on feedback from an enterprise-wide survey, a comprehensive talent development model with an expansive curriculum for

all position levels was implemented. Classes include communication skills, compliance, project management, behavioral interviewing, capacity building, wellness seminars, and coaching performance. Development tools (e.g., multi-rater evaluations and succession planning) are preparing our corporate entities and all International Center employees for continued success.

In addition to the successful launch of our organizational development program, the department has continued to refine policies that address societal advancements and influences while maintaining alignment with what we believe. In compliance with the Synod's Board of Directors philosophy to be "good stewards of the dollars entrusted to us, pay fair salaries, and reward performance in order to be able to attract, motivate, and retain employees," the department exercised stewardship by amending paid time-off benefits to be more aligned with industry standards. The health-care options with the employer subsidy change have resulted in all coverage levels being cost-effectively subsidized by the employer, which is truly an awesome benefit to our workers. After a tremendous amount of analysis, we are making progress on paying industry-appropriate salaries, which along with our consummate benefits, will assist us with recruiting and retaining the best talent.

The Department of Human Resources is well-positioned to execute on the strategy for the next triennium. Our objectives are to (1) continue to create a learning culture with the specific goal to develop leaders; (2) refine the selection process and proactively create a pool of qualified candidates to fill critical positions; (3) create development, retention, and succession plans; (4) provide support and education for employees to assist them in all stages of their vocational life cycle; (5) develop programming for the "Service to Ministry" initiative; and (6) further automate procedures to gain better efficiencies. Accomplishment of these objectives will lead to enhanced services to the boards, commissions, agencies, departments, and corporate entities we support so that they can concentrate on their mission.

Val Rhoden-Kimbrough, *Executive Director*

Information Technology, Facilities, and Building Services

Information Technology. In grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Information Technology (IT) Department collaboratively and proactively plans, executes, and coordinates corporate Synod's technological activities in order to aid and maximize the efficiency and productivity of those charged with executing its mission and ministry.

The strategically aligned services provided by the IT department and the vendors it manages include network administration, data management and application hosting, network security management, software development and maintenance, email, Internet access, web application hosting, personal productivity and collaboration, IT support desk (help desk and microcomputer support), technical training, and IT project and policy management. The IT department currently supports the technology needs of more than 450 Synod users.

Previously known as Concordia Technologies (CT), and prior to that as the LCMS Office of Information Systems (OIS), this IT department team once provided services to a broader group of LCMS organizations, including Concordia Plan Services, Concordia Publishing House, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Lutheran Hour Ministries, the LCMS Foundation, and a variety of district offices and other organizations. Over the past 31 years, the IT organization evolved to its current state, in which it now provides services only to the corporate Synod organization. This evolution was influenced by the increasing diversity of the IT needs and regulatory requirements of the LCMS organizations, the increased capabilities of their internal IT staffs, shifts in IT costs, the evolution of the IT governance model, and an external review.

Technological advances continue to impact our world and our church body in significant ways. The pace of those advances and the evolving needs of corporate Synod challenge us to make appropriate use of God's gift of technology. The IT department's services align with Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) standards and enable the department to transparently and accountably serve corporate Synod with the best possible stewardship.

Over the past triennium, IT has led and/or supported the following initiatives: expansion and enhancement of the missionary recruiting, onboarding, and management system for the Office of International Mission (OIM); implementation of a missionary blogging solution for missionary newsletters; Business Intelligence (BI) and data warehouse implementations for Mission Advancement; deployment of the LCMS app for Apple and Android smart devices; improved congregation and worker locators and other enhancements to www.lcms.org; new websites in support of celebration efforts for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation; replacement of copiers and printers with more-efficient and lower-cost devices; enhanced and expanded building Wi-Fi networks; consolidated, simplified, and standardized applications and hosting infrastructure environments; Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) implementation; and enhanced Lutheran Rosters and Statistics System (LRSS) functionality.

Upcoming technology initiatives include rostered worker management system enhancements; a redesign of the www.lcms.org website; strategic review of financial systems and processes; support of ministry process analysis efforts; and promotion of data driven/data informed decision-making solutions.

Facility Services. The Facilities Department professionally, courteously, and punctually delivers services that provide a reliable, safe, secure, and comfortable environment for International Center employees and guests, and it collaborates with the LCMS building occupants to maximize stewardship of the International Center building and property.

Over the past triennium, the Facilities Group has led and/or supported the following initiatives: energy analysis and related remediation/cost-saving efforts, resulting in materially lower annual energy expenses; required repairs and improvements to the International Center's front entrance walkway and surrounding grounds; productivity-enhancing conference room technology upgrades; and required repairs and related remodeling to some original-construction, 1980s-vintage interior spaces.

Future initiatives include security/safety review of the International Center's front lobby configuration and additional energy-saving/cost-reducing initiatives.

Copy and Mail Services. The copy and mail services team provides paper/printing production and handling, and mail/package shipping and receiving services to the entities of the LCMS International Center.

Over the past triennium, the team processed 2.36 million pieces of outgoing mail; received and distributed 512,000 incoming items; folded and/or inserted 1.4 million pieces; produced 4.8 million pages of copied materials; and folded, padded, bound, laminated, or made into booklets 2.3 million pages.

May God continue to bless the efforts of these teams as they make appropriate use of His gifts.

Myron A. Koehn, *Executive Director of
Information Technology & Facilities*

Office of Project and Policy Administration

The Office of Project and Policy Administration works closely with the Synod's Operations Team (Chief Administrative Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Mission Officer) as well as with unit executives and staff from all corporate entities. The office assists

with project management on behalf of the LCMS Board of Directors, providing project management oversight and/or coordination on behalf of the corporate entities and the other service units under the CAO's management (Building Operations, Information Technology, Human Resources, and Travel and Meeting services); managing the contract process to include independent-contractor agreements and corporate accounts; developing, recommending, implementing, and/or administering organization-wide policies, programs, and procedures on behalf of the CAO and Synod Board of Directors; assisting the CAO with the coordination of the Synod's legal affairs; and serving in a support capacity to the LCMS Board of Directors in the development of strategies and with the definition of processes and procedures.

Since the inception of this office almost two years ago, accomplishments include the formation of project teams for the development of a records-retention policy and the review of the LCMS cell-phone reimbursement policy, development of a project management system to track international legal issues, coordination of a program to highlight the service-unit objectives for administrative units at the International Center, and the development of legal summaries and sample policies as content for a new legal section on the LCMS website intended to benefit LCMS congregations and entities.

Kimberly Schave, *Director of Policy and Project Administration*

Travel and Meeting Planning

Provides event-planning services, including travel, housing, transportation, and conference needs for LCMS organizations. These services are provided for events across the country, including the Synod convention. Since the 2013 LCMS convention, this department has planned or assisted with more than 1,000 off-site events, accommodating an estimated 200,000 people. In addition, Travel and Meeting Planning supported more than 15,000 meetings and activities at the International Center buildings during that same period.

Lynne Marvin, *Director, Travel and Meeting Planning*

Report of the Chief Financial Officer

Since God is the creator and owner of all creation, He is the only one who can "give" away that which He owns. And He does!!! He gives freely, abundantly, to both Christians and non-Christians, to both good and poor managers, without restrictions but with expectations. That is not how the majority of LCMS congregations and others share the gifts our loving Father bestows upon us.

We trust that our most generous and loving God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, provides all the resources (both financial and non-financial) that He knows we will need to do the things He prepared in advance for us to do. He moves the hearts of His people to share His gifts with those called to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout this earth. Collectively, our more than 2 million members support the mission and ministry of our beloved congregations, beloved districts, and beloved Synod with over \$1 billion annually in Sunday-morning offerings. Some give more as the Lord has blessed them; some give less as the Lord has blessed them; but a few give nothing.

Most congregations support the mission and ministry activities beyond their environs by sharing some portion of their Sunday-morning offerings with the district with which they are associated, for larger, district-wide mission and ministry activities. Some give more as the Lord has blessed them; some give less as the Lord has blessed them; but a few give nothing.

Each district, then, shares some portion of what it receives from member congregations with Synod, Inc. for use in synodwide and worldwide mission and ministry activities, along with other activities mandated to be provided by the Synod in convention and the Synod's Articles of Incorporation, Constitution, and Bylaws. Some

give more as the Lord has blessed them; some give less as the Lord has blessed them. This sharing from God's bounty continues to decline. Although the amount of decline in the past three years has not been as severe as the average decline of the previous 20 years, it is still trending negatively.

In the face of continued declining unrestricted revenues, the ability of Synod, Inc. to respond quickly and nimbly to mission and ministry opportunities and challenges laid before us by our Lord also declines, as does our ability to "fill in the gap" when restricted revenues, needed to fund much of our mission and ministry activities, fall short of their goals. The financial challenges facing our beloved Synod persist. I believe that these challenges are of our own making, a product of how we distribute the resources provided by our loving Father. Do we regularly and publicly acknowledge the work of our beloved districts and Synod with enthusiasm and joy, or do we grumble about that work? Do we lift up our beloved district and Synod officers and workers before our loving and merciful God in prayer, or are we simply silent?

Have we hardened our hearts toward others, forgetting that God loved all the world so much that He sent His one and only Son to reconcile Himself to humankind, to be our Savior, and to forgive all the shortcomings and sins of this fallen creation? We each need to repent before our most holy and awesome God, giving thanks for His mercy and His undeserved outpouring of copious blessings upon us. Give thanks, with a grateful heart, and joyfully go about the tasks our Lord has set before you. May our Lord continue to bless you mightily.

I give thanks daily for each and every one of the hardworking, dedicated employees at the International Center who love our Lord and are joyfully at work to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

Departments that report administratively to me are comprised of competent and dedicated employees whose support for Synod operations is vital.

LCMS Accounting. The Accounting Department serves the Synod by accurately recording the receipt and expenditure of restricted and unrestricted resources entrusted to us by congregation members, districts, and other donors. This involves oversight of the annual budget preparation for the Board of Directors and preparation of monthly financial statements. The department provides various accounting and payroll services for multiple LCMS entities. The Congregational Treasurer's Manual is a resource that is updated annually. It provides important guidance in the areas of accounting; payroll for both rostered and nonrostered church workers; federal and state tax matters; incorporating, administering, and dissolving congregations; receiving donations and disbursing them; financial reporting; and risk and insurance matters. This manual is provided to each district for distribution to local congregations.

Internal Audit. The Internal Audit Department serves the Synod's boards, commissions, service departments, and agencies as requested by their governing boards or as directed by the Synod's Board of Directors. The Internal Audit Department (1) performs financial statement audits in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants; (2) helps to reduce overall audit costs by assisting external auditors who perform financial statement audits of the various Synod corporate and trust entities; (3) examines and evaluates corporate and individual compliance with LCMS Board of Directors policies and recommends ways to improve internal controls, operations, and organizational structures to make them more effective and efficient; and (4) investigates allegations of suspected financial and organizational misconduct in accordance with Synod policy.

Risk Management and Insurance. The Risk Management and Insurance Department serves the Synod by analyzing the risk

exposures of each entity/agency, marketing and procuring the appropriate insurance policies, negotiating sufficient policy limits to address exposures, administering and settling claims, and assisting Synod entities with procedural policies, disaster recovery, and disaster/emergency response plans. Further, the department assists each entity or agency of the Synod with contractual review as well as state and federal compliance requirements. The department utilizes various risk-management methods to treat, reduce, or address risk exposure, including self-insurance, risk retention, and risk-sharing arrangements such as large-deductible plans and loss funds (if cost effective and warranted), contractual risk transfer, and insurance. Exposures of the Synod entities and agencies are continually monitored to ensure that any of the risk-management methods are appropriate and are modified to conform to changing markets and operations. The department promotes risk awareness through continual education, communication, and recommendations for actions to protect the people and assets of the LCMS and its related entities. The department provides training and recommendations to the Synod's boards, commissions, service departments, and any Synod entity/agency in the areas of risk management, insurance policy analysis, loss control and safety compliance, and employment issues, through consultation, numerous quarterly and annual reports, reference materials, and presentations to LCMS entities, districts, and congregations.

We have truly been blessed by our Lord, whose beloved church we are. Our Lord has placed challenges before us, but He also has opened up opportunities for us to glorify His name in all the earth, so that every individual might be drawn toward His great love for all the world in Christ Jesus.

May our work together be a blessing to those whom we serve, and may it bring glory and honor to our triune God.

Jerald C. Wulf, *Chief Financial Officer*

R6

Board for National Mission

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours in our risen Lord Jesus.

The Bylaws charge the Board for National Mission (BNM) "*with developing and determining policies for the coordination of and in support of district ministries which support congregations and schools*" and with assisting "*in identifying the specific goals for the Office of National Mission*" (Bylaw 3.8.2). The Bylaws further charge the BNM with "*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*" (Bylaw 3.8.2.1). The BNM also serves as a "*calling agency for institutional and agency chaplains and other non-foreign specialized ministers*" (Bylaw 3.8.2).

This past triennium the BNM made great progress in developing policies that the board believes will serve to guide the Office of National Mission in fulfilling its responsibility of serving congregations and schools through the districts of the Synod to "*repent, confess, and rejoice*" always remaining faithful to Him who alone is the Rock upon whom the Church is built, even our crucified and risen Lord Jesus. The policies that the BNM developed over the past triennium received approval during the April 10–11, 2015, meeting of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) and were subsequently published in the August 2015 edition of the *Reporter*. The board continues to evaluate these policies at each scheduled meeting to be sure that they remain relevant to the current needs and ever-changing challenges facing our congregations and schools.

The board fulfills its responsibility under the Bylaws to "*have oversight of the implementation of policies adopted by the board*" (Bylaw 3.8.2.1) by receiving regular ministry reports from the various

unit directors including rural and small town ministry, youth ministry, black ministry, school ministry, urban and inner-city ministry, stewardship, campus ministry, recognized service organizations (RSOs), disaster response, church planting, witness and outreach, youth ministry, and life and health ministry. These reports are invaluable to the board in reassessing and evaluating the policies for the work of the Office of National Ministry.

The board also continues to set aside time at each scheduled meeting for theological presentations that it believes are necessary to keep the board focused on the mission of the Church. The theological presentations the board heard this past triennium included presentations by Professor Detlev Schulz of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne; Professors Anthony Cook and Jeffrey Gibbs of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; and the Rev. Kou Seying, Director of Cross Cultural Ministries at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The board recently heard a very interesting presentation by the Rev. A. J. Espinosa about the challenges the church faces as she tries to reach the so-called *millennials* with the Gospel.

The board took several actions during this past triennium. The board defined the process for extending calls to specialized pastoral ministers and subsequently extended calls via this process. The board also passed several overtures to be considered by this convention. These included an overture to strengthen family ministry, a most critical issue challenging the church today; a call for a task force for procreation, fertility, and care for the unborn; an overture celebrating the ministry of the Rev. Terry Dittmer, who is retiring from his faithful service to youth ministry in the LCMS; an overture to deal with the continuity of board members and the process for filling vacancies left by members leaving the board; and an overture requesting that the executive director serve as the representative of the BNM at future synod conventions.

The board continues to value the dedicated service of the Rev. Bart Day, who serves as the executive director of the Office of National Mission. His faithfulness to our Lord's Word and to the mission and ministry of the congregations and schools of the LCMS is deeply appreciated and invaluable to the BNM's work of policy development and monitoring. The board also appreciates the guidance given by the Synod's Chief Mission Officer, the Rev. Kevin Robson. His pastoral heart and good business sense are very helpful as the board continues to work on its policies and in setting goals for the Office of National Mission.

We also thank those members of the board who, for various reasons, had to leave the board this past triennium—Mr. Jim Tallmon, the Rev. Tom Engler, and the Rev. Mark Bowditch. Their contributions to the board's discussions and policy development were greatly appreciated as the board worked during the past two trienniums to understand its role as a policy-making board and to develop policies that would enable the Office of National Mission to carry out its assigned duties under the Bylaws to implement "*the policies of the Board for National Mission*" (Bylaw 3.8.2.3). I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the current members of the board who work tirelessly and faithfully to access the needs of the congregations and schools and to devise policies that meet the many challenges that confront the Church in this ever-changing society in which we live and serve our risen Lord. The BNM is composed of very faithful, God-fearing, dedicated men and women who desire to serve their Lord and the saints gathered around Word and Sacrament in the LCMS. I personally thank God for each and every one of them.

As the Board for National Mission continues to serve the congregations and schools through the districts of the Synod, it prays that the policies it develops will serve to enable the congregations and schools of the Synod to repent, confess, and rejoice always, grounded

on the Rock of the Church—our crucified and risen Lord Jesus. To Him alone be all glory now and forever!

Steven C. Briel, *Chair*

R7

Board for International Mission

Due to the 2010 LCMS Convention decision to restructure, the Board for Mission Services, Board for World Relief and Human Care, and other program boards were combined into two independent policy-making boards—the Board for International Mission (BIM) and the Board for National Mission (BNM). The Synod also established two offices for the implementation of the respective boards' policies and the mission and ministry emphases set by convention—the Office of International Mission (OIM) and the Office of National Mission (ONM).

For several years, the two boards met together as we worked to figure out the full implications of restructuring and how the boards related to the offices and to the Office of the President. We would be remiss if we did not take this opportunity to thank Rev. Steven Briel, the chairman of the BNM, and the board members for their good humor and solicitousness. They worked hard and joined with us in asking many questions and trying to understand how restructuring could advance the proclamation of the Gospel and the church's life of mercy. The two boards stopped meeting together several years ago except for one meeting after conventions when officers are installed.

The initial board members elected by convention or appointed by the President of the Synod to serve on the BIM for six-year terms according to regions determined at the convention are listed here:

Ms. Rose E. Adle (Great Lakes Region)

Mr. Kermit W. Almstedt (East Region)

Mr. David Bruns (South Region)

Mr. John W. Edson (President's Representative)

Rev. Juan A. Gonzalez (East Region)

Rev. Michael Lange (West Region)

Mr. Phillip A. Magness (Great Lakes Region)

Ms. Lois Peacock (West Region)

Rev. Bernhard M. Seter (Great Plains Region)

Rev. John F. Temple (South Region)

Mr. Robert Van Gundy (Great Plains Region)

Rev. Lange resigned from the board after taking a call to a district office. Phillip Magness resigned from the board after taking a call and leaving his region for another. Judge David Bruns resigned from the board after being elected to a district office. All of these gentlemen exhibited the finest sense of churchmanship, good humor, joy in the Lord, and dedication to "Witness, Mercy, and Life Together." They were and are missed. At the same time, God has provided able regional replacements. We welcomed Rev. Dr. Jeff Shearier (West Region), Mr. Allan Voss (Great Lakes Region), and Mr. Jerry Frese (South Region).

In 2013, the board elected Rev. Seter as chair, Mr. Kermit Almstedt as vice-chair, and Mr. John Edson as secretary. They will serve until September 2016.

The BIM's authority and responsibility is set forth in Bylaw section 3.8.3. The BIM has been delegated four responsibilities: (1) to determine policies for the OIM; (2) to assist the Office of the President in identifying goals for the OIM; (3) to act as the only Synod sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod; and (4) to monitor, through oversight, outcomes from the policies and goals implemented through the OIM.

Policies and goals are established through consultation with the Office of the President, through OIM reports, and through the

directives and resolutions of the church in convention. There are broad policy areas for which the board is obliged to determine appropriate “ends” for implementation. Those areas are as follows:

- Overall guiding principles
- Safeguarding the rights of our partner churches with and through which our international missionaries work
- Working with the Synod’s colleges, universities, and seminaries
- Working with the Office of the President
- Human care
- Military chaplaincy
- International schools of the Synod and those aligned with partner or associated churches
- Providing for spiritual edification and growth for LCMS called and appointed missionaries and for LCMS members living abroad
- Providing strong missional leadership
- Training of LCMS missionaries
- Calling and withdrawing of called and appointed missionaries
- Working with LCMS auxiliary organizations, RSOs, and districts and congregations
- Disaster response
- Deaconess ministry
- Health ministries
- International grants

The BIM has adopted self-governance policies to guide its work in accordance with the 2013 Constitution and Bylaws and has approved policy ends and principles. The OIM staff has developed metrics and objectives toward meeting these ends that flow well into the BIM meeting schedule and budget-setting issues faced by the OIM. Policies, goals, metrics, and objectives have been a significant issue since restructuring, and we believe we have a good foundation and a process that is functional and flexible.

A short commentary on some of the policy areas is proper and fitting.

Human Care—The church’s corporate life of mercy is not a complementary frill that can be added on or taken off depending on the exigencies of other so-called “needs.” It cannot be separated from mission because mission is born from God’s mercy to sinful man. It is not an ornament on our life together because our life together is born out of the sacramental life given by the One who gave His life for all. Caring for humans in their bodily need cannot be separated from caring for their spiritual need (James 2). The BIM is working to reemphasize the “Mercy” part of our life together.

Military Chaplaincy—The BIM recognizes the privilege we have in working with the Ministry to the Armed Forces (MAF) in sending chaplains into the field, and we thank God for the work of the MAF with our armed services and their families.

International Schools—Over the last triennium, the BIM has worked to be educated about international schools and is looking for ways to raise awareness in the church of these various schools, where they operate, how they relate to the church at large, and their need for a continuous supply of qualified teachers. Someone has called these schools hidden gems and well-kept secrets. Schools operating at this level should not be secrets but rather an important part of our “life together.”

Missionaries—The church showed its mission heart by resolving at the 2013 Convention to double the number of missionaries in the field by the 2016 Convention. We are pleased to say that goal will, by the grace of God, most likely be achieved by the time this report is posted. There were 89 calls extended in this triennium (see Chief Mission Officer Report), and for that we thank and praise God. A *Te Deum* should be sung for good reason. We should praise and thank God and acknowledge His goodness and mercy and His allowance

of poor creatures like us to participate in His gracious work to the children of men. We also sing, “Lord, let Your mercy be upon us as our trust is in You.” We ask that we may “never be confounded.” The admirable work of calling and sending missionaries is a demonstration of a firm trust in God, but we must also tell the church that calling and sending missionaries without also giving the gifts to support and undergird work overseas may confound us all. We would encourage delegates to understand that there is a stewardship cost to the Great Commission.

It is a tremendous honor and privilege as well as a somber activity to be entered into with prayer when signing Diplomas of Vocation and Calls to missionaries, chaplains (through the Ministry to the Armed Forces), GEOs, and others. The BIM has worked hard to see that when someone is sent into the field they are supported during the call process, during training and orientation, in the field, and when they come off the field. That support is physical, mental, and spiritual, and we are proud of what the staff has accomplished in these areas. We urge every member of the Synod to partner with and help us to equip and maintain these workers in the work that we believe God has called them to do. We have a significant financial responsibility to fund not only the missionaries themselves but also the regional program ministries and necessary support services back home. These are some of the biggest constraints to expanding our missionaries in the field.

Providing strong missional leadership means explaining how the church in her ordered life together seeks to go about mission activity. In the course of this triennium, the BIM asked the CCM to explain and interpret what exactly was meant that the BIM is “the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.8.3). Their answer caused consternation and concern to some, and the full meaning of that Bylaw will be explained at this convention. Let it be said that the BIM is seeking communication, coordination, consultation, and collaboration in the mission field, and we are in no way trying to “quench the Spirit.” The fields are ripe and they are huge. The harvest is waiting and it is abundant.

The BIM has worked to coordinate, collaborate, and communicate with the auxiliaries of the LCMS. We thank Dr. Douglas Rutt for his participation and input into our meetings on behalf of Lutheran Hour Ministries and the Lutheran Laymen’s League. The LWML was well represented by President Kay Kreklau, who exhibited the mission heart of the LWML and never tired of reminding us that they are a missionary league for a reason. We look forward to a close working relationship with the new LWML president, Patti Ross.

The BIM has been privileged to have theological presentations given regularly. These presentations help to keep a perspective and a historical sense of the church’s mission and how it has been looked at over the centuries. We appreciate very much those who made the presentations for their obvious hard work and knowledge of the church’s mission.

I believe that all the members of the board wish to thank the church for giving them this marvelous opportunity to serve Christ and His people in “these grey and latter days.” They take their responsibilities seriously. They have developed the kind of thinking that wants “the Church to be alert and learn to listen to the events of the times, lest she miss important opportunities to share the Gospel with others. For even in such adverse times, God has not turned His back on His people in this world. He has elected them from eternity and called them in time through His means of grace, in which Gospel certainty resides. He is a God who does not forsake those who have rejected Him, and He points His Church to reach out to the most hardened unbelievers.”¹ They see their task as service strengthened by the Holy Spirit and, as all of God’s dealings of mercy to the children of men, pure gift.

Bernhard Seter, *Chairman*

Note

1. Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 146.

R8

Commission on Constitutional Matters

The Bylaws of the Synod give the Commission on Constitutional Matters very specific responsibilities. Primarily, the commission is to interpret the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod when requested by a member of the Synod and to ensure that the governing instruments of the Synod and all its agencies are in accord with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod. Among the additional responsibilities are that the commission, in consultation with the Council of Presidents, is to develop a *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* for the dispute resolution process of the Synod and the various expulsion from membership processes of the Synod, and in conjunction with the conventions of the Synod, the commission has the responsibility to examine all reports, overtures, and resolutions to make sure that these are in agreement with the content and language of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod.

Up to this point in the triennium, the commission met nine times in person, in addition to conference call meetings. The “in person” meetings are normally from 8:00 a.m. Fridays through Saturday afternoons. During its meetings, the commission has addressed approximately 100 agenda items, of which about 20 percent were requests for opinions from members of the Synod.

Res. 6-16A, adopted by the 2013 convention of the Synod, directed the Commission on Constitutional Matters to provide resources which would assist members of the Synod desiring to address the published opinions of the commission, including those who wished to express dissent or request clarification. In response, the commission developed a document providing such resources and has posted this document on the commission’s page on the Synod’s website, under the tab “Addressing Published Opinions.”

The 2013 Res. 6-16A also directed the commission to meet annually with the Council of Presidents. Two such meetings have occurred, in November 2014 and in September 2015.

In examining the Articles of Incorporation of the various agencies of the Synod, the commission regularly noted that specific language requirements for these documents, mandated by 2004 Res. 4-11, were missing. In part, the omissions were a result of requirements of the not-for-profit corporation laws of the various states. This topic was discussed at the November 2014 meeting with the Council of Presidents, with the result that a committee was appointed consisting of members of the Commission on Handbook, the Commission on Constitutional Matters, and the Council of Presidents. This committee accomplished its task and the result of its work has been submitted by the commission as an overture to the 2016 convention, entitled “To Assure Uniformity of Relationship and Asset Disposition Language in Governing Documents of Corporate Agencies of the Synod.” (This overture is included elsewhere in the *Convention Workbook*.)

The 2013 Res. 7-18 required the commission, the Council of Presidents, and the Secretary of the Synod to give consideration to providing doctrinal training to Synod’s reconcilers. At the commission’s September 2015 meeting with the Council of Presidents, this topic was discussed and a proposal was developed, i.e., an overture to the 2016 LCMS convention submitted by the commission entitled, “To Provide Assistance to Lay Reconcilers Serving on Dispute Resolution, Hearing, and Final Hearing Panels.” (This overture is included elsewhere in the *Convention Workbook*.)

A major portion of the agenda items of the commission pertain to an examination of the Bylaws and governing documents of the districts of the Synod. In the course of this work, the commission

identified an area of the Bylaws for which additional clarification by a convention of the Synod would be helpful. Bylaw 4.2.1 (a) states: “The conventions of the districts shall be governed by the bylaws adopted by the Synod for its conventions, insofar as these may be applicable.” The commission has found itself constantly needing to determine in a consistent manner the applicability of bylaws developed for the Synod’s conventions to the conventions of a district. The problem is that conventions of the Synod are far more complex than conventions of the districts, particularly some of the smaller districts, and some of the requirements for Synod conventions are difficult to apply to district conventions.

For example, Bylaw 3.1.10.1 requires that official *Convention Proceedings* of each convention are to be mailed by Concordia Publishing House to every congregation, and the bylaw goes on to list who else is to be sent a copy. It would hardly be practical for Concordia Publishing House to do this for each district convention, so the conclusion would be that it is not applicable.

But what about Bylaw 3.1.8 (b), which requires a *Convention Workbook* to be printed and mailed to all delegates and alternates not later than 12 weeks prior to the opening of the convention? Other than perhaps cost, there is no reason for this bylaw not to be applicable also for district conventions. The purpose of such a bylaw is to allow the delegates to have ample time to become informed of the issues coming before the convention in order that they might vote intelligently. However, with today’s new means of communications, could there be other alternatives for districts to provide the required information to delegates? And if so, how should bylaws be changed to provide for other alternatives?

A similar concern occurs in relation to the various convention timelines for the nomination process and other notifications that need to be published in official organs of the Synod. In attempting to sort through these relationships, one member of the commission developed a chart to demonstrate the relationship of the various sections of the bylaws pertaining to district and Synod conventions. In the process of discussing how bylaws for the conventions of the Synod can best be applied to conventions of the districts, the commission concluded that more definitive guidance would be needed to determine the degree to which the bylaws regarding conventions of the Synod applied to conventions of the districts. Since the commission is charged with interpreting the bylaws, it did not seem to be within the authority of the commission to recommend a solution. Rather, the commission requests that the Synod appoint a committee to examine this question and propose a solution to give clarity in terms of the degree to which the bylaws of the conventions of the Synod are applicable to the conventions of the districts.

For many years the commission has provided assistance to the congregations of the Synod as they develop constitutions and bylaws for themselves. These guidelines are simply recommendations for congregations to consider, a way to assist congregations when working with their constitutions and bylaws. This triennium the commission also developed a second set of guidelines intended for small congregations, which may better fit their circumstances. These guidelines, along with many other official documents are located on the Commission on Constitutional Matters page on Synod’s website. Some of the other documents that can be found there are the updated version of the *Handbook* of the Synod, a *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* for each of the Synod dispute resolution and expulsion processes, and the minutes of the meetings of the Commission on Constitutional Matters.

Those opinions of the commission which are of particular interest to the Synod are printed as an appendix to this *Convention Workbook*. All of the commission’s opinions are posted on the commission’s website.

The members of the commission are as follows: Mr. Thomas Deadrick, Dr. George Gude (chairman), Dr. Raymond Hartwig (secretary), Judge Neely Owen, Rev. Larry Peters, and Dr. John Sias. The

commission representative to the Commission on *Handbook* was Dr. George J. Gude.

George J. Gude, *Chairman*

R9

Commission on Doctrinal Review

Along with the undersigned, the Commission on Doctrinal Review consists of four additional members: Dr. Paul Raabe (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis), Dr. Walter A. Maier III (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne), Dr. Naomichi Masaki (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne), and Dr. Steven Mueller (Concordia University, Irvine). In this triennium (2013–2016), the Commission has rendered two decisions regarding material already in print and three decisions in response to appeals from the authors or publisher. In keeping with the Bylaws of Synod which govern the doctrinal review process, the Commission seeks to ensure that all materials published by the Synod through its official organs and Concordia Publishing House are clearly in agreement with the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

John T. Pless, *Chairman*
Commission on Doctrinal Review

R10

Commission on *Handbook*

The Commission on *Handbook* (Bylaws 3.9.4–3.9.4.2) consists of eight members, five voting and three nonvoting. Three of the voting members are individual Synod members (ordained or commissioned ministers) and two of the voting members are attorneys. The three nonvoting members are the Secretary of the Synod, the Chief Administrative Officer of the Synod, and a voting member of the 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. Current voting members are Gordon D. Tresch (Chairman), Marvin L. Temme, Richard T. Nuffer, Dale L. Sattgast (chosen to fill the seat previously occupied by Walter Rosin during this triennium), and David W. Totsky (chosen to fill the seat previously occupied by Albert M. Marcis during this triennium). Nonvoting members are Raymond L. Hartwig, Ronald P. Schultz, and George J. Gude.

The primary responsibility of the Commission on *Handbook* is to provide ongoing maintenance and management of the Synod *Handbook* (Constitution, Bylaws, and Articles of Incorporation of the Synod—Bylaw 3.9.4). Specific responsibilities of the commission are explicated in Bylaw 3.9.4.2, as follows: (1) assisting convention floor committees when developing amendment proposals to the Constitution, Bylaws, and 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 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.

At its organizational meeting of October 11, 2013, the commission reelected Gordon D. Tresch as chairman. Also reelected were Rev. Marvin Temme as vice chairman and Rev. Raymond Hartwig as secretary. (The commission had previously determined that its leadership

would be elected at the initial meeting of the commission following each Synod convention.) As per a previous decision by the commission: (1) all minutes are to be posted in timely fashion on the Synod's website under the link to the Commission on *Handbook*, with meeting dates to be posted in advance on the Synod's website on the link to the Commission on *Handbook*; (2) the chairman, with the assistance of the Secretary's Office, is to provide an agenda to the commission in advance of each meeting, with items of business assigned members for each reference; (3) writing assignments given by the chairman are to be indicated on the agenda; and (4) devotional responsibilities are to be assigned by the chairman on a rotating basis.

The commission finalized revisions to the Synod *Handbook* following the 2013 Synod convention.

In response to 2013 Res. 6-16A, the commission met with the Council of Presidents and the CCM on November 20, 2014, in Garden Grove, California, to discuss "making the CCM a more integrated servant of the Synod ..." among other matters. At this meeting, it was determined to form a committee comprised of representatives of the Council of Presidents, Chief Administrative Officer, Synod Secretary, and single representatives from the Commission on *Handbook* and CCM to review and make recommendations to the 2016 convention for revisions to 2004 Res. 4-11 (to assure uniformity of relationship and asset disposition language in governing documents of corporate agencies of the Synod) relating to legal and other concerns that have arisen since adoption of the original resolution. At its meeting on November 20, 2015, the commission approved recommending rescission of 2004 Res. 4-11 in lieu of adopting a new bylaw which would honor the intent of the 2004 resolution in a manner more amenable to legal and other requirements that have arisen since the adoption of the 2004 resolution.

Over the course of its meetings, the commission approved revisions to the *Handbook* to be proposed to the 2016 Synod convention in six subject areas: Dispute Resolution, Synod Administration, Synod and District Conventions, District Administration, Regional Elections, and Concordia University System. At its meeting in January 2016, the commission approved six overtures to be submitted to the Synod convention covering these subject matters.

Since the last convention, the Commission on *Handbook* has also adopted from time to time nonsubstantive editorial changes to the Bylaws which have been applied to the electronic version of the *Handbook* available on the Internet.

During the course of the triennium, the commission will have met eight times prior to the 2016 convention. All specific agenda items are publicly available on the Synod's website under the link to the Commission on *Handbook*.

Gordon D. Tresch, *Chairman*

R11

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" (2013 Bylaws 3.9.5.2 to 3.9.5.4). This includes responding to expressions of dissent (Bylaw 1.8) and approving church body requests for altar and pulpit fellowship (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2). It renders official theological opinions as requested or mandated by the Synod Bylaws.

The CTCR consists of 16 voting and four advisory members. The voting membership consists of two parish pastors, one parish teacher, and two laypersons elected by the synodical convention; two pastors (one of whom is a district president) and two laypersons elected by the Council of Presidents (COP); four seminary professors, two appointed or elected by each seminary faculty; and three additional members appointed by the President of the Synod, in consultation with the vice-presidents (one of these appointees is a Concordia University System [CUS] professor). The advisory members are the President and First Vice-President of the Synod and the presidents of the two seminaries. Advisory members have 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 or elected by a seminary 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 CTCR's officers, the chairmen of the three committees, and the executive staff. While not rigidly defined, one committee focuses on matters of church relations, the second on doctrinal matters, and the third on church and society issues. All official reports, opinions, or documents of the CTCR are finally approved before their release or publication by the entire commission meeting in plenary.

Current commission members and the dates their current terms expire are as follows: Rev. Dr. Andrew Bartelt (2016), Rev. Terry Cripe (2016), Rev. Robert Dargatz (2019), Rev. Thomas Egger (2016), Rev. Dr. Carl Fickenscher II (2016), Rev. Dr. Charles Gieschen (2016), Mr. Chad Hamilton (2016), Mr. Timothy Hardy (2016), Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison (adv.), Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer (adv.), Rev. Dr. Herbert Mueller Jr. (adv.), Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Oschwald (2016), Rev. Dr. Philip Penhallegon (2016), Dr. Andrea Pitkus (2019), Rev. Arlo Pullmann (2016), Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast (adv.), Rev. Dr. Robert Rosin (2016), Mr. Jeffrey Schwarz (2016), Dr. Jesse Yow Jr. (2016), and Rev. Dr. Roland Ziegler (2016). The Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver III, the Assistant to the President for Church Relations (Director of Church Relations), regularly attends CTCR meetings and reports to the commission regarding matters of church relations which are under the purview of the President's Office. CTCR officers during the past triennium were as follows: Dr. Rast, Chairman; Dr. Bartelt, Vice-Chairman; and Dr. Rosin, Secretary. In the past triennium, there was one change in CTCR membership. At the beginning of the triennium, Mr. Kirk Farney served as a lay member of the commission appointed by the COP. He resigned in 2014 due to the press of other responsibilities. Mr. Chad Hamilton was appointed by the COP to fulfill his term.

The CTCR is currently served by two full-time executive staff members. The Rev. Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer, who served the commission as Assistant and/or Associate Executive Director since 1991, has been Executive Director since 2008. The Rev. Larry M. Vogel has served as Associate Executive Director since 2009.

In addition to facilitating the work of the commission detailed below in this report, the executive staff also responds to emails, letters, and telephone calls requesting further information about or clarification of the LCMS view of various topics and teachings. In the past triennium, around 400 such requests were addressed by email alone.

From 1991–2007, the CTCR was served by three full-time executive staff members. Since 2008, however, one of those executive staff positions has been continuously vacant, primarily due to the Synod's budgetary limitations. The commission expresses its urgent hope that this ongoing executive staff vacancy can be filled in the coming triennium.

I. Theology

A. Assignments Completed (listed chronologically)

1. Implications of the Natural Knowledge of God (2007 Res. 3-04A)

At the April 2013 meeting of the CTCR (its final meeting of the previous triennium), the CTCR completed work on the report *The Natural Knowledge of God in Christian Confession and Christian Witness*, which it had adopted "in principle" at its January 2013 meeting. While this action was reported to the 2013 convention, the late completion of this report did not enable its inclusion in the *2013 Workbook*; therefore, it is provided herein (see Appendix). The report addresses historic and contemporary questions about what human reason can know of God and what God has revealed about Himself in the Holy Scriptures. The report was mailed to rostered workers and congregations of the LCMS and is available from Concordia Publishing House and online at www.lcms.org/ctcr.

2. Theology and Practice of Prayer: A Lutheran View—Study and Discussion Guide

At its April 2013 meeting, the commission adopted a study and discussion guide based on its 2011 report, *Theology and Practice of Prayer*. The CTCR's intention to produce such a guide was mentioned in the CTCR's report to the 2013 convention (see *2013 Convention Workbook*, p. 78), but it was not completed at the time that report was approved. It is therefore included herein (see Appendix) and is available online at www.lcms.org/ctcr.

3. Questions about "Ordained Deacons"

On May 29, 2012, President Harrison asked the CTCR several questions about the possibility of establishing a *jure humano* office of "ordained deacons" as a way of addressing confusion about laymen carrying out pastoral responsibilities and debate and division over the licensing of deacons for Word and Sacrament ministry. Following exegetical and historical study of the question, the commission adopted a resolution at its April 2013 meeting indicating that in its judgment, an ordained diaconate "would not be helpful, and may actually add to the confusion." The CTCR also expressed its intention to study the issues behind the President's request. After the adoption of Res. 4-06A at the 2013 Synod convention, however, a task force was established to consider these issues and the commission removed the study from its list of assignments. (See also IA 12 below.)

4. Responses to 2013 Omnibus Resolution A

Omnibus Resolution A of the 2013 convention included 20 overtures for referral to the CTCR (and in some cases also to other entities; see *2013 Convention Proceedings*, p. 199). At its September 2013 meeting, the commission approved responses to those who had submitted these overtures, indicating various ways that their concerns were being or would be addressed.

5. Policy for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Declaring Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Another Church Body

The LCMS is receiving an increasing number of requests for church fellowship and/or closer working relationships from church bodies around the world. This is largely due to the reputation of the LCMS as a firmly biblical and strongly confessional church body and to changing (and often more complex) ecclesial realities and circumstances. In order to address these realities and to provide an orderly and up-to-date process for declaring fellowship, a reworked and revised policy statement was adopted by the commission at its May 2014 meeting. The document is included in the Appendix of the *Convention Workbook* and is online at www.lcms.org/ctcr.

6. Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective

On an increasing number of occasions, the CTCR has been asked (by Synod officials, church workers, and laity) to provide guidance regarding a biblical view of transsexual behaviors or transgender individuals. The questions involve persons who are uncertain whether they are “truly” male or female, those who regularly dress and present themselves as a member of the opposite sex, and those who are participating in hormonal or surgical procedures to change their sex identification from one sex to the other. In response, after considerable study and consultation with those who have experience and professional knowledge in this area, the commission adopted the above-named report at its May 2014 meeting. It is included in the Appendix and is available online at www.lcms.org/ctcr.

7. On Infant/Young Child Communion: Knowing What We Seek and Why We Come

At the November 2012 meeting of the CTCR, President Harrison requested a supplement to the CTCR’s 1997 opinion *Response to “Concerns of the South Wisconsin District Circuits 18 and 19 Regarding Infant Communion”* addressing the practice of communing infants and very young children (paedocommunion). At its September 2014 meeting, the CTCR adopted the above-named report, which attends to historical, confessional, and biblical arguments for and against the practice of paedocommunion and endorses (and further substantiates) its 1997 opinion. Adopted as a partial response to the President’s request, it is included in the Appendix and is available at www.lcms.org/ctcr. The final part of the CTCR’s response to President Harrison’s request was an opinion, adopted at the same meeting, referencing both this report and its previous 1997 opinion (see below under section E).

8. Guidelines for Congregational, District, and Synodical Communion Statements

Statements about admission to the Lord’s Supper in LCMS service folders reflect a wide variety of approaches and often lack clarity and consistency. In September 2012, the President of the Synod requested that the CTCR prepare guidelines for the wording of Communion statements within the Synod. The CTCR responded by adopting *Guidelines for Congregational, District, and Synodical Communion Statements* at its December 2014 meeting. The guidelines were published in the April 2015 *Reporter*. They are included in the Appendix and are online at www.lcms.org/ctcr.

9. CTCR Review of 2005 Task Force Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices

In September 2012, President Harrison asked the CTCR to review the January 2005 document “Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices” in light of 2004 Res. 3-08A, 2007 Res. 3-07, and the CTCR’s 2009 report *The Creator’s Tapestry* in order “to provide clarity and direction on the issue of women’s service in the church.” At its December 2014 meeting, the CTCR adopted the requested review, together with an executive summary of the same. The report includes a section-by-section review of the 2005 guidelines. The report and executive summary are included in the Appendix and are online at www.lcms.org/ctcr.

10. A Christian Response to Hostility and Persecution

In response to various questions and concerns about the sources and nature of rising hostility toward Christianity in our day, the CTCR (at its December 2014 meeting) adopted a Bible study and discussion guide titled *Why Are You Persecuting Me? A Christian Response to Hostility and Persecution*. This study guide is included in the Appendix and is online at www.lcms.org/ctcr.

11. In Christ All Things Hold Together (2013 Res. 4-15)

The 2013 convention encouraged the CTCR to continue and complete an assignment on the relationship of science and theology that the commission had begun in the previous triennium. The report, *In Christ All Things Hold Together: The Intersection of Science and Christian Theology*, was adopted by the CTCR in February 2015. This report addresses contemporary views of and approaches to science in which the methods and assumptions of physical and biological science overrule truth claims based on Scripture, and also seeks to promote and encourage positive views and uses of science as a gift of God and a vocation that Christians can and should support and embrace. The report considers theological foundations, historical context, philosophical issues, a comparison of biblical and scientific knowledge, and practical applications. It is available from CPH or by download at www.lcms.org/ctcr and is included in the Appendix.

12. Continued Study of 1989 Res. 3-05B

Since 2005, the commission has engaged in consideration and discussion of 1989 Resolution 3-05B because of continuing questions regarding the practice of laymen exercising functions of the pastoral office in certain circumstances as approved in this resolution. At the 2013 convention, Resolution 4-06A “To Address Questions re Service of Licensed Lay Deacons” was adopted, asking the President of the Synod to appoint a task force, including representation from the CTCR, seminaries, COP, and deacons, to address questions and offer recommendations to the 2016 LCMS convention. The task force reported to the Synod on July 8, 2015, and requested the CTCR (and both seminary faculties) to review its theology and recommendations. At its September 2015 meeting, the CTCR affirmed “the theological basis and recommendations of the report.” At this time, no further work on 1989 Res. 3-05B is planned.

13. Studies on Biblical Interpretation (2010 Res. 3-07)

The LCMS has an unambiguous position affirming the inerrancy of Holy Scripture and rejecting unbiblical higher critical assumptions about the Bible. The 2010 Res. 3-07 recognized that “[t]here are new hermeneutical challenges facing the Church in this postmodern era.” Consequently, it asked the CTCR in consultation with the faculties of our seminaries to provide studies “addressing the question, ‘How to Read the Bible’ that also address ‘current trends in interpretation.’” In response to the 2010 request, the CTCR approved a prefatory paragraph for CPH’s use in connection with the new book *How to Read the Bible with Understanding* by Lane Burgland, encouraging the use of this book as “a helpful resource and guide to the interpretation of Scripture” and (by the way of a link in the preface itself) directing readers to other resources helpful for biblical interpretation. This list of other study aids was approved by the CTCR in February 2016 and will be posted on the CTCR’s website (and updated as needed).

B. Studies in Progress

1. Guidelines for Inter-Christian Relationships (1981 Res. 3-03A) and “To Study Article VI of Synod’s Constitution” (2010 Res. 8-30B)

Since 1981, the CTCR has completed a number of documents relating to the subject of relationships with other churches and Christians, some in specific response to 1981 Res. 3-03A. These include the following: *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, see above, 1A 4).

At the same time, the commission continues work on the Synod's request that the CTCR prepare "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), viewing this as a matter of ongoing discussion and concern in the Synod.

The 2010 Res. 8-30B "To Study Article VI of Synod's Constitution" added a particular focus that fits within the general purview of this same assignment. It asked that "the President of the Synod in consultation with the Council of Presidents, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, and the Commission on Constitutional Matters make provisions for the preparation of materials (a study) that explain the biblical, confessional, and historical basis for Article VI of the Synod's Constitution."

The CTCR is at work on a three-part study of this matter (historical, exegetical, and systematic) that will include practical guidance.

2. The Priesthood of All Believers (2007 Res. 1-03)

The 2007 Res. 1-03 directed the CTCR "to prepare a comprehensive study document which clearly presents the biblical teaching of the royal priesthood and Luther's teaching on vocation in light of the mission challenges of today." The CTCR continues its work on this assignment and expects to complete it in the coming triennium.

3. Relationship of Man and Woman (1995 Res. 3-10; 2010 Res. 3-06)

In commending the 2009 CTCR report *The Creator's Tapestry* (prepared in partial response to 1995 Res. 3-10), the 2010 convention also asked the CTCR "to publish the results of the study to the church at large and to address additional questions and issues." The CTCR is committed to continuing its work on various aspects of the topic of "the relationship of man and woman," including the foundational issue of "the order of creation," as requested by 1995 Res. 3-10 and 2010 Res. 3-06. Included in this study will be a May 2015 request of President Harrison to consider current and possible future implications of the 2015 Supreme Court opinion *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

4. Study Resources for 2017 Reformation Celebration (2007 Res. 3-02, 2013 Res. 3-15)

The 2007 Res. 3-02 resolved that the CTCR, in consultation with the International Lutheran Council, work to prepare materials to encourage the study of the Ecumenical Creeds and Lutheran Confessions in preparation for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The same concerns were reiterated in 2013 Res. 3-15. The CTCR has identified helpful Reformation resources and conferred with Concordia Publishing House, which has an ambitious plan to encourage study of the Reformation, including such things as anniversary editions of a Spanish study Bible, *The Lutheran Difference*, and commemoratives. A multimedia website, among other resources, is planned by CPH. Lastly, the CTCR is cautiously optimistic that the revision of *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* will be available for publication in 2017 (see item I B 8 below). Moreover, papers from the International Conference on Confessional Leadership (see item I C below) were published online at blogs.lcms.org/2015/journal-of-lutheran-mission-september2015.

5. Women Teaching Theology

In correspondence dated March 15, 2012, President Harrison requested a CTCR opinion on the matter of "women serving as members of theological faculties and women in general (uncalled

or adjunct) teaching theology at our Concordias and seminaries." In his request, President Harrison notes that these questions involve "numerous considerations," including several which he specifically enumerates (e.g., operative passages of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, the matter of deaconess studies, partner church practices and ecumenical implications, etc.) and others which he hopes and anticipates will be identified by the CTCR and addressed in its response.

The subcommittee to which this request has been assigned has devoted considerable time and discussion to this issue, and it continues to engage seriously and substantively the various facets of this question identified in President Harrison's request as well as related issues and concerns (e.g., questions about women serving as presidents of LCMS colleges and universities).

6. Women in Combat (2013 Res. 2-12A)

The 2013 Synod convention asked the CTCR to "produce a statement" on the matter of women serving in combat positions that might be considered by the 2016 convention. The commission prepared an overture to the 2016 convention on this issue that provides an update on its work thus far, addresses the concern of the 2013 Res. 2-12A that the LCMS support those who have a religious and moral objection to women serving in ground combat positions, and indicates its intention to produce an in-depth report on this matter in the coming triennium.

7. Study and Guidance on Confession and Absolution (2013 Res. 4-13)

In 2007 (Res. 2-07A), the LCMS resolved to encourage greater use of the unique gift of individual Confession and Absolution. Noting that resolution, the 2013 convention (Res. 4-13 "To Encourage Confession and Absolution for Pastors") gave particular attention to the spiritual well-being of its pastors, encouraging them, without coercion, to make use of this Means of Grace according to need. The resolution went on to ask the CTCR to "provide a document that sets forth our church's teaching on confession and absolution and offers positive guidance to pastors and congregations in their exercise of the Office of the Keys." The commission is at work on this assignment, anticipating its completion in the near future.

8. Update Synod's Catechetical Materials (2013 Res. 3-13A)

Recognizing a need to update the "Explanation" portion of *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (1991) because of changes in morality, law, and many other facets of contemporary life, the 2013 Synod convention directed the CTCR in concurrence with the Synod President "to propose such needed revisions to the content" of the synodical catechism while retaining the 1986 translation of the Small Catechism proper. In concurrence with President Harrison, a drafting committee was subsequently appointed by the CTCR, chaired by Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer (Executive Director) and including Dr. Charles Arand and Rev. Thomas Egger (CSL), Rev. John Pless (CTSFW), Rev. Wally Arp (parish pastor), Dr. Jan Lohmeyer (commissioned teacher), and Rev. Larry Vogel (CTCR staff).

Priorities for the committee's work have been to provide a succinct explanation of each catechetical point, a Scripture narrative to illustrate it, consistency with past Lutheran catechesis (especially the Large Catechism), clear connections to contemporary life, and a devotional connection. The committee defined an approach (or template) for the presentation of the materials in the Explanation and field-tested it in 2015. Responses were strongly positive. A two-stage field test of the proposed materials ("with the help of Concordia Publishing House," as mandated by Res. 3-13A) is anticipated to begin by the summer of 2016. The first stage will be a field test of the materials for the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed. Stage two will be a field test of the remaining chief parts: the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, the Office of the Keys and Confession, and the Lord's Supper. Following

final approval by the CTCR and the President's Office (including doctrinal review), the revised Explanation will be published by CPH—hopefully sometime in 2017—as a resource available for use by the church as it observes the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation.

9. Study of Baptism (2013 Res. 4-08A)

At its 2013 convention, the Synod adopted Res. 4-08A “To Provide Responsible Pastoral Care with Regard to Practices Surrounding Holy Baptism.” The resolution firmly reiterates the necessity of retaining the words of our Lord in baptizing, contrary to the practice of some who “baptize” with some formula other than “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). The Synod then directed the CTCR to “provide a study of the theology on Holy Baptism that sets forth the scriptural and confessional teaching on this great sacrament of Christian rebirth and offer positive guidance to pastors and congregations regarding proper baptismal practices.” A committee of the CTCR has begun work on this assignment and has formulated an outline and approach for its completion.

10. Intinction Study and Discussion Guide

President Terry Cripe (Ohio District), a member of the CTCR, shared a request from the COP for the CTCR to consider the practice of intinction (dipping the body of Christ into the cup of His blood to be consumed by the communicant). The request is for a document for the COP to use to study and discuss this practice. A CTCR committee was assigned to work on a draft document on the topic.

11. Human Sexuality: Contemporary Issues

The commission's 1985 report, *Human Sexuality*, has served the Synod well for more than three decades as a tool for study, discussion, and guidance in considering God's gift of sexuality and His intentions for its right place in human life. However, profound changes have occurred in the understanding of human sexuality in popular culture. A majority of people in the US and the Western world now view unmarried sexual relationships, homosexual behavior, bisexuality, and other practices and behaviors as both morally acceptable and normal. An increasing number of Christians have also begun to question what were, a generation ago, widely held convictions among Christians about the moral propriety of contraception, remarriage after divorce, and other practices and behaviors. In light of such fluctuating attitudes and personal convictions, the CTCR has determined that a revised or expanded report on the subject of human sexuality is needed. Initial work on this project has been assigned to a CTCR committee.

12. Request from Northern Indiana District Pastors Conference

In email correspondence dated Aug. 10, 2015, the regional Northern Indiana District pastors conference asked the CTCR to consider formulating and proposing to the Synod a doctrinal statement on male-only clergy, in keeping with LCMS Bylaw 1.6.2. The CTCR Executive Committee has placed this assignment on its own agenda for further discussion and consideration.

C. Theological Conferences

Second International Conference on Confessional Leadership in the 21st Century (2013 Res. 4-04)

After the request of 2010 Res. 3-02A “To Support Confessional Lutheranism at Home and Abroad,” the CTCR (in consultation with the Office of the President) planned and developed an international theological conference on confessional leadership in the 21st century that met in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2012. Confessional Lutheran leaders representing over 20 million Lutherans from around the world gathered for reports, presentations, and prayer. Participants were highly

affirmative of the event and urged the LCMS to organize similar gatherings in the future, if at all possible. The 2013 convention of the LCMS gave thanks to God for the 2012 conference and urged “the Commission on Theology and Church Relations and the President's Office to continue their planning for a similar international conference” (2013 Res. 4-04).

As it had in 2012, the generous support of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation provided significant financial resources for a second international gathering of some 125 Lutheran church leaders from around the world May 3–8, 2015, in Wittenberg, Germany. This conference was held in conjunction with the dedication of the “Old Latin School” as a new International Lutheran Center. Meeting in the very town where the Reformation began, the conference theme was “Celebrating the Reformation Rightly: Remembrance, Repentance, Rejoicing.” The leaders (from over 40 different countries and representing nearly 25 million Lutherans) remembered, repented, and rejoiced together. Presentations were offered in English, but with translations for Spanish- and French-speaking participants. Services were held in St. Mary's Church, the town church where Luther preached. Despite the variety of peoples and cultures, a unified commitment was present. President Wakseyoum Idossa of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (with nearly eight million members) stated it well: “This gathering of church leaders is a sign for us to go on to the next 500 years of the Reformation. The Reformation's message to the world is that, according to the context we are in now, we need to be faithful to the Word of God as we serve God's people.”

D. Other Matters

1. Spanish Translation of CTCR Reports

Due to continuing requests for Lutheran theological literature in Spanish, both in the US and in Central and South America, the commission continues to facilitate the translation of its reports into Spanish. Eleven reports were translated this past triennium and a total of sixteen reports are currently available in Spanish in electronic formats. Additional translations of other CTCR reports will be prepared as needed. The CTCR's report, *Immigrants Among Us*, is available in a Spanish print edition. Copies of CTCR translations are shared with the Synod's Spanish-speaking partner churches throughout the world.

2. “Policy for Rendering CTCR Opinions in a 30-Day Period”

In dispute resolution cases that may result in expulsion of a member of the Synod, 2013 Resolution 7-11 added a requirement of the CCM and the CTCR to “have in place procedures for responding” within 30 days to requests for opinions by a dispute resolution panel (see Bylaw 2.14.7.8 [I] [3]). At its May 2014 meeting, the commission approved a policy statement detailing a process for rendering an opinion in a timely manner in such cases.

E. Requests for Opinions

The CTCR receives requests for two sorts of opinions. Advisory opinions are requests for guidance from the Synod President, district presidents, and others on specific matters of theology and practice. The Bylaws of the LCMS also require that, in certain cases involving potential expulsion of an LCMS member or a theological question from a dispute resolution panel, the CTCR is mandated to offer an opinion within 30 days of the request (see Bylaw 1.10.18.1(h); 2.14.8). The CTCR received one bylaw-mandated opinion request in this triennium and adopted a response to this request on Feb. 20, 2016. The following items were requests for advisory opinions.

1. Response to the Request for a Supplement to the 1997 CTCR Opinion Response to “Concerns of the South Wisconsin District Circuits 18 and 19 Regarding Infant Communion”

As noted above (I A 7) the CTCR received a request from President Harrison for a supplement to its earlier opinion on paedocommunion. In addition to the report, *Knowing What We Seek and Why We Come*, the commission adopted a resolution on Sept. 13, 2014, that (1) supported the conclusions of its 1997 opinion on the matter of paedocommunion; (2) recognized that while “there is no precise numerical age for first Communion required by Scripture or the Confessions, worthy reception *does* involve conscious self-examination so that communicants know what they seek to receive at Christ’s altar and why they come to the Sacrament coupled with pastoral examination to encourage worthy use of the Sacrament”; and (3) concluded “that the communing of infants and very young children prior to their instruction and examination in the faith is contrary to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and should not be the practice of Lutheran congregations and pastors.”

2. Request for Opinions from South Wisconsin District President

In December 2014, the CTCR received a request from the president of the South Wisconsin District for an opinion on the nature of calls to LCMS clergy serving as professors at CUS schools. In March 2015, the CTCR received a request from the same president for an opinion on questions related to the administration of the Lord’s Supper to shut-ins. The CTCR has assigned these requests to the appropriate CTCR committee to prepare responses for consideration by the plenary commission.

F. Expressions of Dissent

CTCR Response to the ACELC’s “Dissent Women Redux 2014-01-27”

In correspondence dated April 15, 2014, the CTCR received from the Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations (ACELC) a document titled “Dissent Women Redux 2014-01-27” in which the ACELC expressed continuing disagreement with certain aspects of the LCMS position on the service of women in the church. At its Dec. 11, 2015, meeting, the CTCR approved a “non-formal” response to the ACELC’s dissent referencing the CTCR’s Dec. 12, 2014, response to President Harrison’s request for a “CTCR Review of 2005 Task Force *Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*” (see I A 9 above). In its response, the CTCR asks the ACELC to hold its dissent in abeyance as it studies and discusses the CTCR’s response to President Harrison (which the commission sees as addressing many of the issues raised in the ACELC’s “Dissent Redux”). The CTCR also reaffirms in its response to the ACELC its commitment to continue and complete a thorough study of the role of women in the church that further addresses various questions and concerns raised in the ACELC dissent.

II. Church Relations

A. Requests for Church Fellowship

1. Church Fellowship Requests Approved by the CTCR

a. Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church (GKLI)

The LCMS and the Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church (GKLI) have been in contact for many years. After correspondence and several visits by LCMS personnel, the GKLI requested altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS this past triennium, and the Office of the President asked the CTCR to consider this request on the basis of 2013 Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c). Meetings and visits together have revealed extensive agreement in doctrine and practice. Where there are certain

differences in practice, the GKLI has requested counsel and assistance from the LCMS. In view of the doctrinal agreement between our two churches and continuing movement toward common practice, the CTCR informed the President that it supported declaring church fellowship with the Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church. Subsequently, the LCMS called a missionary to serve in Indonesia to aid in theological education. At the present time, the President is continuing to consider this fellowship request and the CTCR’s recommendation in light of ongoing work being done in Indonesia.

b. Lutheran Church in Norway

The Lutheran Church in Norway (LCN), a small, confessional church which has had a close relationship with the LCMS for several decades, requested altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS in 2011. During the course of multiple cordial visits, meetings, and correspondence between representatives of the two churches, agreement in doctrine and practice between our two churches was recognized and affirmed. At its May 2014 meeting, on the basis of extensive examination and discussions regarding the history, doctrine, and practice of the LCN, the commission approved recognition of fellowship between our churches on the basis of 2013 Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c). In November 2015, President Harrison formally declared fellowship with the LCN (see the President’s Report). The 2016 convention will be asked to endorse his action.

c. The Lutheran Church in Uruguay

The LCMS Office of Church Relations relayed a request for church fellowship to the CTCR on Dec. 11, 2015, from a small, emerging Lutheran church in Latin America, The Lutheran Church in Uruguay (LCU). The LCU was planted in 1936 with assistance from the LCMS and later nurtured by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB), an LCMS partner. It is now an independent church body, in fellowship with the IELB. After examining the history, confessions, and practices at its December 2015 meeting, the commission recommended church fellowship on the basis of Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c). On Jan. 6, 2016, President Harrison formally declared church fellowship with the LCU. The 2016 convention will be asked to ratify his action.

d. Recognition of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kazakhstan, the Lutheran Church in Guatemala, and the Lutheran Church of Venezuela as Self-Governing Partner Churches

In February 2016, the Board for International Mission (BIM) conveyed to the CTCR requests from three church bodies (the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kazakhstan, the Lutheran Church in Guatemala, and the Lutheran Church of Venezuela) for recognition as self-governing partner church bodies in keeping with Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (d). The bylaw requires that such be approved by the CTCR before being proposed by the BIM for recognition by the Synod in convention. This approach to formal recognition and fellowship is grounded in the *de facto* fellowship that exists for all LCMS missions. The church in Kazakhstan, which has received mission assistance from the LCMS in the past, seeks to become an independent church and partner of the LCMS. The churches in Venezuela and Guatemala became independent some years ago and are members of the ILC, but had not been formally recognized by the LCMS as self-governing partner churches. At its February 2016 meeting, the CTCR approved the recommendations for recognition of the three churches.

2. Current/Pending Requests for Church Fellowship

a. Ethiopian Evangelical Church—Mekane Yesus

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church—Mekane Yesus (EECMY) is one of the largest Lutheran church bodies in the world with some

eight million members. Although the LCMS and the EECMY are not in altar and pulpit fellowship, in recent years a mutually beneficial relationship has developed between our two church bodies. Ethiopian students have studied at LCMS seminaries and several EECMY pastors have become members of the Synod through colloquy and serve in various capacities and locations. President Wakseyoum Idossa represented the EECMY at both the 2012 and 2015 International Conferences on Confessional Leadership (I C 1 above) hosted by the CTCR and the President's Office. In 2013, the EECMY severed its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Church of Sweden because of decisions by those churches to affirm homosexual practices and ordination of individuals living an active homosexual lifestyle.

Since 2010, the LCMS and EECMY have related together in accordance with a protocol document that outlined a basis for cooperation and mutual support in certain areas. In 2014, the LCMS and the EECMY signed a revised "partnership agreement" that enhanced their commitment to working together where possible and appropriate and that included a mutual commitment to theological discussions directed toward the hoped-for goal of church fellowship based on agreement in doctrine and practice. The LCMS relationship with the EECMY is currently focused largely on seminary education with LCMS theologians assisting Mekane Yesus Seminary in teaching and library development. The LCMS has also been partnering with the EECMY in the printing and distribution of confessional and catechetical texts and in their work of developing a new hymnal.

Doctrinal discussions between the churches have begun (in accordance with Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 [b]) and will continue in the coming triennium.

b. Lutheran Churches in Sudan/South Sudan

Two Lutheran churches in Sudan/South Sudan have requested fellowship with the LCMS in the past triennium: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan/South Sudan and the Sudan Evangelical Lutheran Church. Representatives of both churches have visited the International Center to discuss the history, theology, and practices of their churches and have shared pertinent theological and organizational materials. The CTCR is considering the fellowship requests in accordance with Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c) and hopes to make recommendations to the President of the Synod in the near future.

c. Confessional Lutheran Church in South Africa

The LCMS is in fellowship with two churches in South Africa, the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa and the Lutheran Church in South Africa. During this triennium, a third Lutheran church, the Confessional Lutheran Church in South Africa (CLCSA), requested church fellowship with the LCMS. The commission is considering this fellowship request in keeping with Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c) and on the basis of theological and organizational materials from the CLCSA. An element in the process of fellowship consideration is the possible formation of a "synodical conference" in South Africa between the three church bodies. Such a conference would clarify the relationship among South African Lutherans and aid in fellowship considerations.

Note: A number of other church bodies have expressed interest in theological discussions leading to church fellowship with the LCMS in the past triennium, but these requests are still under consideration and review by the President's Office and have not been taken up formally by the CTCR.

B. Meetings and Discussions with Other Churches and Groups

1. Anglican Church in North America

Two 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, their understandings of authority in the church, contemporary challenges and opportunities facing American Christianity, worship and catechesis, the understanding of holy marriage, and the doctrine and practice of the Lord's Supper. The meetings have been open and cordial, with the churches' representatives learning from one another and discovering many important areas of common ground, but also differences in doctrine and practice that require further discussion.

LCMS representatives have included President Matthew Harrison; Dr. Collver, Director of Church Relations; Dr. Lehenbauer and Rev. Vogel of the CTCR; Dr. Lawrence Rast, President of CTSFW; and Dr. Frederick Baue. The LCMS delegation has been joined by Dr. John Stephenson of the Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC) because the ACNA has a number of congregations in Canada. 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 2016. Discussions will continue to address such topics as the understanding of Law and Gospel, theology and practice of the Lord's Supper, contemporary cultural challenges, and potential joint endeavors.

2. North American Lutheran Church

Representatives of the LCMS and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) have been meeting together since 2011. Formal conversation topics have included the authority of Scripture, the relationship of the Gospel to Scripture, the ordination of women, discussions about appropriate responses to unbiblical views of sexuality and marriage, and current and potential threats to religious freedom. LCMS representatives include President Matthew Harrison, Dr. Albert Collver, Rev. John Pless, Dr. Lehenbauer, and Rev. Vogel. The NALC was represented by Bp. John Bradosky, Em. Bp. Paull Spring, Dr. James Nestingen, Rev. Mark Chavez, and Dr. David Wendel. Dr. Robert Bugbee (LCC) also participates in the meetings because of NALC presence in Canada. Discussions continue to be cordial and mutually beneficial. A joint statement on marriage was prepared in May 2013 by the representatives of the LCMS and NALC, together with representatives of the ACNA. The affirmation, signed by President Matthew Harrison, President Robert Bugbee, and Archbishop Robert Duncan, may be downloaded at <http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=726&DocID=2384>.

3. Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Informal discussions between leaders of the LCMS, WELS, and ELS began in 2012. It has continued on a yearly basis since that time, with the most recent discussions held in December 2015. The meetings have dispelled many caricatures regarding the different churches and helped to identify what currently unites and divides the church bodies of the former Synodical Conference in their respective efforts to pursue confessional Lutheranism. After concluding the 2015 meeting, the three church bodies issued a joint report on their discussions (available for download at <http://blogs.lcms.org/2015/report-on-the-2012-15-meetings-of-els-lcms-and-wels-leaders>). All three synods have encouraged future meetings by national convention action. Among the topics that have been addressed in the discussions are church and ministry, church fellowship, and hermeneutics. Future

topics of discussion will include the service of women in the church and the issue of “cooperation in externals.”

4. National Association of Evangelicals

The LCMS is not a member of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). In recent years, however, the Associate Executive Director of the CTCR has represented the LCMS in a number of meetings hosted by the NAE on various topics such as religious freedom, changing views of marriage and sexuality in American culture, immigration, and racism.

5. Common Ground Christian Network

Common Ground Christian Network (CGCN) is an affiliation of individuals representing theologically conservative groups and movements, who are typically from a “mainline” Christian church either currently or in the recent past. CGCN meets once or twice each year and invited the LCMS to send a representative. The executive staff has represented the Synod at CGCN meetings on several occasions. Topics for consideration have included religious freedom, heterodoxy in the mainline churches, and ongoing challenges (both from secular society and from many who claim Christian identity) to the biblical view of marriage and sexual morality.

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” (2013 Bylaw 3.9.5.4 “Fraternal and Other Organizations”). This bylaw includes the Synod’s long-standing provisions for dealing with lodges as well as other organizations which have “an unchristian or anti-Christian character.” In providing resources and information to the members of the Synod regarding such organizations, philosophies, and religious movements, the CTCR includes a section of its website designated “Evaluations” (see www.lcms.org/ctcr). Evaluations fall into two general categories: 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 evaluations on the topics of Abrahamic religions, Beth Moore, Buddhism, Christian Reconstructionism, Hinduism, near death experiences, and Swedenborgianism (New Church). The entire current listing of topics addressed by CTCR evaluations includes:

- Abrahamic Religions
- Baha’i Faith
- Beth Moore
- Buddhism
- Center for Progressive Christianity
- Christian Identity Movement
- Christian Reconstructionism
- Christian Science
- Church of Scientology
- Churchless Christianity
- Cults—An Overview (also available in Spanish)
- Cursillo Movement
- Elks Lodge
- Emergent Church
- Enneagram
- Fraternal Order of Eagles
- God’s Learning Channel
- Hinduism
- Human Potential Movement
- International Churches of Christ (ICOC)

- Islam
- Jehovah’s Witnesses
- Judaism
- Kabbalah
- Latter-day Saints
- The Lodge
- Membership in Certain Fraternal Organizations: A Pastoral Approach
- Moose International
- Near Death Experiences
- New Age Movement
- The Occult
- Rastafarians
- Reiki
- Restorationism
- Salvation Army
- Satanism
- Seventh-day Adventism
- Swedenborgianism (New Church)
- Theophotic Prayer Ministry
- Transhumanism
- Unification Church
- Unitarian-Universalist Association (UUA)
- United Pentecostal Church International
- Unity School of Christianity
- Vineyard Ministries
- Wicca
- Word-Faith Movement
- Yoga

The commission through its staff continues to respond to a large number of inquiries, making use of resources accumulated in its library and files and information available on the Internet.

Lawrence Rast, *Chairman*
Joel D. Lehenbauer, *Executive Director*

R12

Concordia Historical Institute

The beginnings of Concordia Historical Institute (CHI) are found in the first Constitution of the LCMS in 1847, which directed the Secretary of the Synod to chronicle the denomination’s history and also collect and preserve documents and artifacts of historic value. Officially incorporated as a nonprofit institution in 1927, CHI continues to share with church and community the historical treasures entrusted to its care, while serving as a resource for observing major anniversaries of the Synod’s leaders, entities, congregations, and events.

As the official Department of Archives and History of the LCMS (see Synod 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 church body that has, under the mercy and grace of Christ and His Word, grown and flourished.

The Lord of the Church has been gracious to Concordia Historical Institute over these past three years. Striving to make CHI the premier provider of Lutheran historical resources in North America, the CHI staff, volunteers, and board are thankful for the prayers, encouragement, and support of LCMS districts, congregations, and individuals as we continue to serve the advancement of the history of the LCMS.

As the Synod’s Department of Archives, Concordia Historical Institute is charged with managing the largest Lutheran archival collection in North America—a collection that includes documents, publications, rare books, photographs, audio/visual media, artifacts, and fine art. CHI actively manages the following:

- Over 15,500 linear feet (3 miles) of archival material in environmentally controlled rooms
- Two high-quality museums (a permanent exhibit on the Reformation and history of the Synod at the LCMS headquarters in Kirkwood, Missouri, and a museum with changing exhibits at CHI, located on the campus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis)
- The newly updated and expanded *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* (the longest-running journal of Lutheran history in North America)
- A professional archival and research service that organizes, catalogs, and provides access to the millions of archived items in the CHI collection
- An annual awards program that recognizes excellence in publishing books and articles on the history of Lutheranism in North America
- A large archival collection of historic photographs, motion picture film, audio- and videotapes, artifacts from the mission field, as well as fine art associated with the Reformation and the Lutheran Church in North America
- A completely redesigned website: concordiahistoricalinstitute.org
- Two historic sites spotlighting the life and faith of the first Lutheran settlers in Perry County, Missouri (the Saxon Lutheran Memorial and Hill of Peace Lutheran Memorial)

Over the last three years, CHI has presented to church and community historic treasures entrusted to its care in new and exciting ways. One of these is the current CHI exhibit “Bringing Christ to the Highlands: Painting a Portrait of Early Lutheran Mission Work in Papua New Guinea.” This exhibit chronicles the beginnings of LCMS mission work in Papua New Guinea. (A printed catalog is available for those not able to visit the CHI exhibit on the campus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.)

The Institute is excited to provide engaging resources for the upcoming 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. It has written 25 sets of bulletin inserts, short biographies, and Bible studies on important “Faces for the Reformation.” These resources are available to individuals and congregations free of charge on the Synod’s lutheranreformation.org website. CHI has also partnered with Concordia Publishing House in producing a beautiful catalog of CHI’s Reformation Coin and Medal Collection, the most significant institutional collection of these medallion witnesses to the Reformation outside of Europe. It is our prayer that this publication will serve as a fascinating introduction to the Lutheran faith confessed in numismatic art over the last five centuries.

Concordia Historical Institute is dedicated to enhancing its service to the LCMS in the next triennium. We continue to cultivate stronger, mutually beneficial partnerships with departments of the Synod and local archives maintained by LCMS districts, educational institutions, RSOs, and congregations. CHI has recently been blessed with two special endowments that will fund major research/publishing projects over the next several years: one on the history of the Walther League and the other on the history of the walkout at Concordia Seminary. Both projects will do much to advance research on these two important historical subjects.

By the grace of God, Concordia Historical Institute, now under the guidance of a full-time director, will continue to solicit historically valuable documents and artifacts and increase the value of its services, products, and events, while reducing risks associated with collecting, organizing, preserving, publishing, and exhibiting historic treasures (especially as more documents are generated and stored electronically).

With joy, Concordia Historical Institute continues to serve the LCMS so that generations to come might not only better understand the fascinating history of our Synod, but more clearly understand the redeeming work of Christ in the life of the Lutheran Church. To that

end, the Institute asks for your continued prayers and financial support in moving Lutheran history forward.

Daniel Harmelink, *Executive Director*

R13

Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services Years Ended December 31, 2013–2015

“Concordia Plan Services Walks Together with LCMS Ministries in Caring for Workers and Their Families ... so that the Word of God Continues to Spread!”

Concordia Plan Services (CPS) was created by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to care for its workers. For more than fifty years, CPS has done just that, and today is the benefits administrator of choice for approximately 6,000 LCMS organizations in the United States and in mission fields worldwide. More than 31,200 active workers, along with approximately 53,100 dependents, are covered by the various benefits of the Concordia Plans.

CPS also provides retirement benefits to over 21,100 retirees and health benefits for more than 250 seminary students (and their eligible dependents), and it offers continued health coverage for qualifying retirees. As of December 31, 2015, the asset value of the Concordia Plans exceeded \$3.7 billion.

Serving You

CPS exists to serve the LCMS community, and through that service links together churches, schools, universities, seminaries, RSOs, and others. Through the collective strength of our ministries, CPS can provide high-quality benefits to servants of the Lord across the LCMS. Only when working together can we care for LCMS workers across town, across the country, and around the world.

In the last three years, CPS initiated and expanded products and services to provide proactive, resource-focused assistance to LCMS workers and employers.

Ministerial Care: Recognizing that ordained and commissioned ministers within the LCMS face unique challenges both at work and at home, CPS expanded its resources to these groups.

- Expanded the Pastoral Support Network (PSN), a telephonic resource available to pastors and their families, which is free and confidential.
- Established the Ministerial Care Coalition (MC2), which is comprised of individuals located in most LCMS districts who are focused on caring for commissioned ministers and helping them find and access resources when in need.
- Worked with the Office of National Mission and the Concordia Center for the Family (located on the Concordia University, Ann Arbor, campus) to distribute the “Church Worker Family Needs Survey.” The survey was piloted in 2015.

Wellness: Introduced in 2011, the Be Well Rewards program came to an end in 2015. Participation had fallen in recent years and CPS identified the need for a new program to better engage Concordia Health Plan members in healthy living.

In early 2016, CPS introduced **Vitality**, an interactive wellness platform that encourages CHP members to be active all year long and improve their lifestyles. The Vitality program focuses on personal responsibility and understanding how your actions impact your health. More than an incentive/reward program, Vitality promotes adoption of a healthy lifestyle. The incentives offered through Vitality are obtained in a more intentional way to encourage healthy living.

Vitality is just one tool that CPS introduced to help CHP members maintain good health, as well as keep healthcare costs down. Other tools include these:

- **Clear Savings:** Members can compare cost and quality of basic medical procedures and prescription drugs using this interactive transparency tool.
- **Concordia Total Health Team:** The team is made up of nurses, behavioral specialists, nutritionists, counselors, exercise specialists, and others who listen to members and help find solutions for them to get and stay healthy.

To effectively promote healthy living among our own staff, CPS supports a variety of wellness initiatives internally. In 2014, CPS was named one of the **100 “Healthiest Workplaces” in America**. The “Healthiest 100” list is compiled by Healthiest Employers, a wellness technology company based in Indianapolis, and represents employers of all sizes, regions, and industries. Employers who made the list comprehensively effect employee wellness programs and practices. CPS was also a finalist in the 2013 and 2014 Healthiest Employer contests sponsored by the *St. Louis Business Journal*, being named St. Louis’ healthiest employer in 2013 among all employers in the 100–499 employee category.

Health Care Reform Done Right: To help Concordia Health Plan members understand how we can impact our own health and the cost of health care, CPS initiated “Health Care Reform Done Right” (HCRDR). The elements of the program are Healthy Behaviors, Lifestyles, and Choices; Health Management; Health Stewardship; and Health Coverage. The HCRDR blog series can be found at ConcordiaPlans.org.

Affordable Care Act: CPS remains focused on helping employers understand and comply with the changes and requirements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), while continuing to offer health care coverage options that are consistent with LCMS beliefs. Actions included these:

- Educated small employers about the small business health care credit, which resulted in potential tax credits across the LCMS totaling \$11 million annually for three years
- Helped persuade government agencies to expand the ACA contraceptive services mandate exemption
- Consistently maintained LCMS beliefs with respect to specific health services, including abortion, abortifacients, and transgender surgery
- Helped employers meet ACA compliance responsibilities, including the production of required Summaries of Benefits and Coverages (SBCs), providing notice templates for employers, educating employers on the “Pay or Play” rules, and helping them meet reporting requirements
- Lowered costs through utilization of over \$1.5 million that had been applied for and received from the Early Retiree Reinsurance Program
- Monitored ACA issues and advocated on behalf of CHP members and employers, such as with the future “Cadillac” excise tax on the cost of health coverage
- Helped secure passage of the Church Plan Clarification Act, which should assist some mid-size and large employers with ACA compliance requirements

Retirement Connection: Retirement Connection was introduced in 2014 and allows workers to view their projected Concordia Retirement Plan (CRP) and Concordia Retirement Savings Plan (CRSP) benefits and apply for retirement benefits online. Workers can also create and compare different retirement scenarios based on their actual data to help in retirement planning. Since introduction, over 7,000 unique users have logged into the site and created over 56,000 retirement-planning scenarios.

CRSP Enhancements: Changes to the Concordia Retirement Savings Plan will allow more members to participate with enhanced service and resources.

- Fidelity became the service provider for the CRSP in 2015. Fidelity was selected for their resources, customer support, and commitment

to helping members become ready for retirement. They also have resources specific to church plans and their members.

- Members in the CRSP now may choose to save by contributing on a pre-tax basis, an after-tax Roth basis, or a combination of both.
- If elected by the employer, part-time workers may be eligible to save in the CRSP.

CHP Enhancements: Changes in the Concordia Health Plan have enhanced coverage for specific groups.

- Working with the Office of International Mission, CPS introduced a new health plan for international workers, Blue Cross Blue Shield GeoBlue.
- CPS introduced a new Medicare supplemental program for 2016 administered by AmWINS. Now retirees may choose from an expanded selection of Medicare supplemental options and may enroll in voluntary dental and vision coverage.

Paychex: CPS works with Paychex, a national third-party payroll and business administration provider, to offer LCMS ministries a reduced rate on payroll processing and tax compliance solutions. Paychex has expertise in the unique needs of church payroll. As of December 31, 2015, more than 430 ministries were using Paychex services to administer payroll for more than 13,000 employees.

Communications: New and updated communications tools allow CPS’s audiences to interact with the organization more easily and to more quickly find information they seek.

- MyCPS.org launched to create a single entry point for members to access their information and link to sites of service providers. Online open enrollment also began, allowing workers at select employers to choose their health plan option online.
- The CPS Facebook page grew to over 15,000 likes, providing an outlet for member and employer interaction.
- A redesigned ConcordiaPlans.org website launched. The new site features 45 pages instead of the 800+ on the former site, making content easier to locate.
- A new series of videos under the banner *Sharing in Your Spirit of Service* launched to illustrate the connection between CPS and LCMS workers.
- The new CPS magazine, *Serve*, launched to create a stronger connection between CPS and the members in the Concordia Plans. *Serve* features stories of real members of the Concordia Plans.

Looking to the Future

CPS serves the ministries and members in the Plans by studying, anticipating, and preparing for future developments in employee benefits and the economy, while seeking to meet the needs of LCMS ministries. Looking into the coming years, the following will be among the areas of focus for CPS:

Economic Environment Impact: Recognizing the challenges presented by ongoing volatility and uncertainty in the economy, both domestic and global, CPS remains focused on delivering products and services designed to meet the benefit needs of Concordia Plans members, while practicing biblically based stewardship principles.

Health Care Reform—Status and Impact on the CHP: Provisions related to the ACA are constantly changing. CPS will continue to work diligently to prepare for and evaluate the impact of ACA provisions on LCMS ministries. CPS is also actively involved in organizations that allow us to dialogue with government leaders on the ACA and other issues.

Health Plan Options: Ministries in the CHP are diverse, based on their type, size, and geography. As ministries grow and evolve, CPS will seek to create and offer plan design options that effectively meet ministries’ needs.

Financial Wellness: CPS will place a stronger focus on financial wellness for the workers of the LCMS. CPS will introduce new

resources that will help our workers understand the basics of financial wellness beyond saving for retirement.

Ministry Resources: CPS will strive to identify and offer additional ancillary products and services. This will lead to an expanded offering to LCMS employers as well as supplemental coverage opportunities for workers.

Serving the Workers and the Work of the Church

In order to best serve workers, and to meet our mission, CPS has put increased emphasis on understanding the unique needs of the varying ministries of the LCMS. This focus has provided ministries of all sizes, from one worker to hundreds of workers, the opportunity to provide comprehensive benefits packages that support the critical work of staff members and their families.

Concordia Retirement Plan (CRP)

- Modifications to the CRP were made effective mid-2014 to help preserve the stability of the CRP for the future.
- As of December 31, 2015, there were 29,600 workers in the CRP Traditional Option; 1,600 workers in the Account Option; 21,100 retirees and survivors of retirees; and 12,400 terminated vested members and their survivors.
- In 2015, the CRP provided \$198.8 million in primary retirement benefits; \$18.5 million in supplemental retirement account benefits; \$20.9 million in survivor benefits; and \$14 million in the retiree medical supplement.
- The net assets of the Concordia Retirement Plan as of December 31, 2015, were approximately \$3.1 billion.

Concordia Retirement Savings Plan (CRSP)

- The CRSP provides workers at eligible employers an opportunity to establish a 403(b) personal retirement savings account to supplement their CRP retirement benefit.
- In 2015, the CRSP accumulated \$34.9 million in employee contributions; \$2.9 million in optional employer match funds; and \$2.8 million in employee rollover contributions.
- The total assets of the CRSP as of December 31, 2015, were approximately \$346 million.

Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan (CDSP)

- The CDSP provides a disability income benefit for enrolled workers and a preretirement lump-sum death benefit for enrolled workers and dependents.
- In 2015, CPS paid \$8.9 million in survivor benefits; \$6.9 million in disability benefits; and \$8 million in health benefits for survivors and disabled members.
- The total assets of the Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan as of December 31, 2015, were approximately \$115.9 million.

Concordia Health Plan (CHP)

- Four new health plan options were added for 2015 Open Enrollment. These were added to provide employers quality benefits and increased flexibility in advance of the anticipated implementation of the “Cadillac Tax” within the ACA.
- In 2015, approximately 40 percent of CHP members were enrolled in a High Deductible Health Plan, signaling a shift in the way LCMS employers are funding health coverage.
- In the year ending December 31, 2015, the CHP paid \$249.6 million in benefits.
- The CHP has total assets of approximately \$148.1 million.

Pension Plan for Pastors and Teachers

- Prior to the CRP, the Pension Plan for Pastors and Teachers (PPPT) was the only pension program for pastors and teachers of participating employers of the LCMS.

- When the CRP was established in 1965, new enrollments in the PPPT ceased, but the Plan remains in place to support those enrolled prior to 1965.
- As of December 31, 2015, there were over 2,700 individuals receiving benefits as retired members, disabled members, or surviving dependents of deceased members.
- The PPPT paid out \$8.1 million in benefits in the year ending December 31, 2015, and has a net asset value of approximately \$42 million.

CPS Wants to Acknowledge with Heartfelt Gratitude

- The support and participation of LCMS employers, workers, and retirees
- Members of the CPS Board of Directors whose terms ended since 2013:
 - Rev. John Kaiser served one three-year term, 2013–2016
 - Ms. Kristi Matus served one three-year term, 2013–2016
 - Mr. George Nolde served three three-year terms, 2007–2016
 - Mr. Ron Wolf served three three-year terms, 2005–2014
- God’s continued blessing on the work of CPS as we strive to serve the needs of LCMS ministries and workers

CPS is blessed to be given the opportunity to support the ministries and workers of the LCMS by offering worker-related benefit and service solutions that allow them to focus on their ministries. Each and every day, we take the charge of walking together to heart, committed to serving those in His service with integrity, compassion, excellence, stewardship, and accountability. CPS is part of the Church—caring for its workers—dedicated to its mission through all that we do. We proudly serve those who serve to the glory of God.

James F. (Jim) Sanft, President & CEO

R14

Concordia Publishing House

“The Church has not been built upon the authority of a man. Rather, it has been built upon the ministry of the confession Peter made, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. ... <Therefore, [Christ] addresses [Peter] as a minister of this office in which this confession and doctrine is to be in operation and says: ‘Upon this Rock,’ i.e., this preaching and this preaching office.’” (The Power and Primacy of the Pope, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, p. 298).

Christ’s mission is our passion at Concordia Publishing House. We exist to provide resources that are faithful to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. The Missouri Synod can be proud of the service that its publishing house provides throughout the world, crossing all boundaries and barriers of race, culture, or church organizations. We are available 24/7/365, responding and providing resources around the globe. We are grateful for the many opportunities God gave us during the last triennium to do so. We would like to share some highlights from the past three years.

A significant milestone was reached in the completion of the largest and most in-depth Lutheran Bible study program available: LifeLight. We now have a study for every single book of the Bible in this program and, in addition, a variety of topical studies. LifeLight studies provide an active, nine-week exploration of *entire Bible books* and *topical themes of Scripture*. Participants uncover Bible truths, from the little details to the big-picture teachings. LifeLight follows a simple three-step format for personal, group, and lecture-based study that complements all kinds of learning styles. We are proud of the partnership with the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, from which the LifeLight Bible study project originated, and deeply thankful for the faithful field testers who worked so hard for so many

years providing us the feedback needed to make this truly the premier Lutheran Bible study program available today.

We are also extremely pleased and humbled to have been asked by the Synod to provide publishing support for the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in October 2017. We developed and produced the website lutheranreformation.org. We continue to work with the Synod to release an ongoing series of resources to help our congregations celebrate this significant milestone. You will be seeing an ever-increasing amount of books, curriculum pieces, music, and promotional pieces for our congregations to use to reach out boldly with the confession of Christ, the Son of the living God, calling all to repent, confess, and rejoice in His salvation.

Delivering a wide variety of resources in various digital formats continues to be a high priority for CPH. We now offer nearly 600 of our books in the Amazon Kindle ebook format, the world's most widely used digital format, and we have literally hundreds of Bible studies available for digital download and use. We are enhancing our digital options for Sunday School and Day School curriculum. Working in close partnership with active parish school teachers, principals, DCEs, and professors across our Concordia University System, we are developing innovative resources that address a wide and diverse variety of learning styles in various teacher-driven educational formats using the latest in digital technologies.

In terms of Bible resources, we were pleased to release *The Lutheran Bible Companion*, a significant two-volume work offering a richly illustrated guide to a more in-depth exploration of the context and meaning of the Holy Scriptures. On the other end of the spectrum, mindful of the critical need for resources that speak to those with no or little Bible literacy, we released *Know the Bible Now*, which uses infographics to provide a broad overview of the Bible and its various literary genres and, most important, a keen focus on the center of Scripture: the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

We are working closely with the Commission on Theology and Church Relations and the LCMS President's Office as the new explanation of the Small Catechism is prepared. We will provide publishing services and counsel as this product continues to move forward toward its projected publication in October 2017.

We value our various publishing partnerships with entities of the International Center. We are thrilled with our partnership with the National Youth Gathering team, through which each youth attending this event will receive a special Gathering edition of *The Lutheran Study Bible*. We have worked closely with our partners in LCMS International Mission to deliver Lutheran resources, in Spanish, on iPads. These are just some of the many ongoing partnerships we have with various agencies and entities of the Synod.

We invite all members of the Synod and all members of our congregations to visit our website, cph.org, and review the thousands of products and services we offer, all in support of the Church's mission, which is our passion. May God richly bless the ongoing ministry of confessing Christ to be the Son of God, and may He lead many more people to repent, confess, and rejoice in the Savior.

Dr. Bruce Kintz, *President/CEO*

R15

Concordia University System

The reason for being (*raison d'être*) of the Concordia University System (CUS) is the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is in Him that all knowledge can be rightly understood and ordered: "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). This assumption flows from the confession of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod that grace alone, faith alone, and

Scripture alone are the pillars of the Christian faith as articulated in the Lutheran Confessions and the Book of Concord.

The formal incorporation of the Concordia University System in 1992 combined the historic ministries of the ten colleges and universities of the LCMS into a collaborative unit for the benefit and enrichment of all the schools. Each of the institutions, from their founding, is a ministry "owned and operated" by the LCMS.

Each school has provided a summary of how its mission of witness to Jesus Christ and service to its students and communities is presently lived out. Several recent developments are especially noteworthy (as also exhibited in the charts), namely, the continued growth—collectively—in the number of students, the expansion of graduate programs at the MA, EdD, and PhD levels, and the growth of professional programs—nursing, pharmacy, physical therapy. An abiding concern is the decline in church vocations among students even as enrollment continues to grow. President Harrison and the CUS Board have begun several initiatives to address this concern.

Special recognition and thanks are due the presidents who are leading these ministries of the church in higher education in the face of significant challenges.

These societal and cultural forces include a demographic decline in the historic pool of prospective students, an increase of often intrusive governmental regulations, the complex impact of distance education on all institutions of higher learning, the severe economic challenges for students, and the increasingly competitive environments of junior colleges and cognate institutions.

As an indication that the institutions of the Concordia University System remain defined by and embedded in the witness of the church, the presidents and their boards of regents expressed their solidarity with the church's mission in an identity statement (*Reporter*, April 2015). This statement, along with supporting protocols, express a distinctive commitment and identity. The church can rightly rejoice and give thanks for the following:

Lutheran Identity Standards for Concordia University Institutions

As educational institutions of the LCMS, the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System confess the faith of the Church.

The Concordias uphold the teachings of sacred Scripture and their articulation in the Lutheran Confessions. This includes the biblical teaching that Jesus Christ—true God and true man—is the sole way to God's mercy and grace; that at the beginning of time the triune God created all things; that life is sacred from conception to natural death; and that marriage between a man and a woman is a sacred gift of God's creative hand—over against the reductionistic assumptions of many in our culture who view men and women as only transitory and material beings.

As educational institutions of the LCMS, the Concordias are committed to providing an excellent, robust curriculum in the liberal arts and professional studies, which together equip students for various vocations of service to church and society. As C. F. W. Walther wrote, "As long as and wherever the Christian church flourished, it always and everywhere proved itself to be a friend and cultivator of all good arts and sciences, gave its future servants a scholarly preparatory training, and did not disdain to permit its gifted youth at its schools of higher learning to be trained by the standard products of even pagan arts and science." Accordingly, the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System affirm and promise to uphold these identity standards:

1. *Identity Statements*—The institution's mission statement (and/or vision statement) clearly identifies it as an institution of the LCMS, as do the institution's primary print and electronic pub-

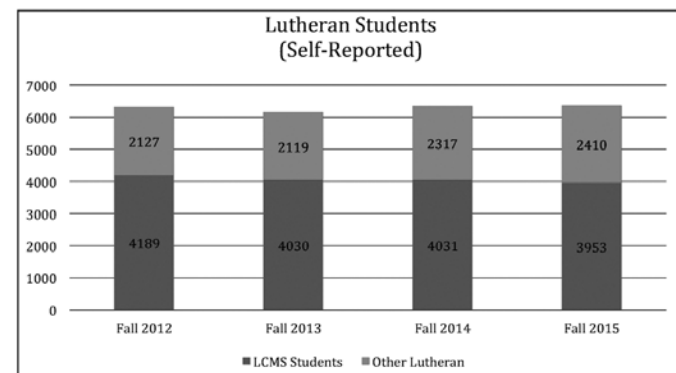
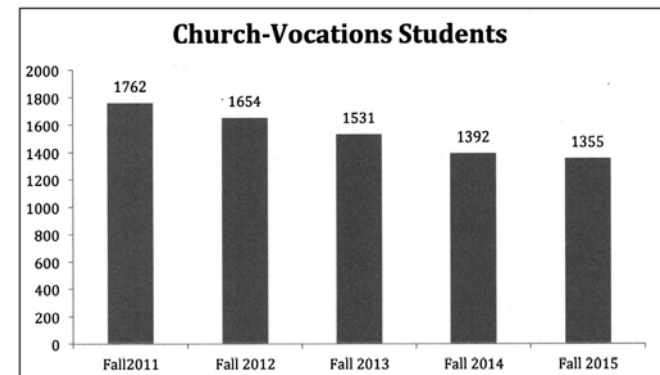
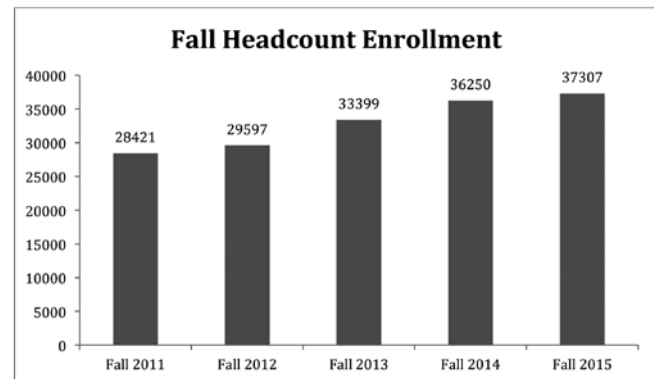
lications.

2. **Governing Board**—All of the institution's regents are active members in good standing of LCMS congregations (Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [5]).
3. **Senior Leadership**—The president and senior leaders over academic student life, admissions, and athletics are active members in good standing of LCMS congregations and faithfully participate in worship and religious activities on campus and in their local congregations.
4. **Faculty**—Each tenure-track or continuing-level faculty search is given optimal exposure among members of congregations of the LCMS to identify faculty who are qualified in their respective academic disciplines and are members of LCMS congregations. Ideally, all faculty members are active members of LCMS congregations. When academically qualified LCMS members are not available, faculty members will be Christians who affirm, at minimum, the content of the Ecumenical Creeds and are members of Christian congregations. All faculty members promise to perform their duties in harmony with the truths of Holy Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and the doctrinal statements of the LCMS (Bylaw 3.10.5.6.2).
5. **Theology Faculty**—All theology faculty (full-time and part-time) are active members in good standing of LCMS congregations and fully affirm the theological confession of the LCMS. As the LCMS Bylaws indicate, all full-time theology faculty receive prior approval from the CUS Board of Directors before being appointed or called (Bylaw 3.6.6.1).
6. **Academic Freedom and Responsibility**—All full-time faculty acknowledge their acceptance of the CUS Statement of Academic Freedom and Responsibilities. All faculty, both full- and part-time, pledge to perform their duties in harmony with Scripture, the Confessions, and the Synod's doctrinal statements (Bylaw 3.10.5.6.2).
7. **Faith and Learning**—In accordance with the doctrine of the two kingdoms, all faculty strive to faithfully bring Lutheran theology into interaction with their various academic disciplines while respecting the integrity of those disciplines. Likewise, in other campus arenas, faculty, staff, and administrators will seek to apply Lutheran theology within their campus vocations.
8. **Required Theology Courses**—The institution requires two to three theology courses for an undergraduate degree, typically in Old Testament, New Testament, and Christian doctrine. Because these courses are directly related to the theological identity of CUS institutions and to the identity formation of graduates, these theology courses will normally be taken at a CUS institution. Exceptions to this will be approved by the institution's called theological faculty.
9. **Preparation of Church Workers**—The institution provides resources to recruit, form, nurture, and place students preparing for professional church work in the LCMS (e.g., preseminary, predeaconess, deaconess, Lutheran teacher, DCE, DCO, DPM). Specific programs may vary by campus.
10. **Campus Ministry**—The institution offers regular opportunities for worship that reflect the confession of the church. Faculty, staff, and students are strongly encouraged to participate in these services. The institution calls a campus pastor or chaplain, who is a minister of religion—ordained of the LCMS, to oversee the worship life of the community, organize opportunities for Christian service and witness, and provide 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 ten Lutheran Identity Standards. The report will be endorsed

by each respective board of regents and will be shared with the campus community.

Enrollment, Placement, and Financial Information



Placement of Ministers of Religion—Commissioned 2012–2015

Category	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Teacher	230	231	203
DCE	37	36	37
Lay Minister	9	7	3
DCO	1	0	3
Deaconess	21	26	14
Parish Music	5	6	8
Family Life	0	1	3
Totals	303	307	271

Annual Operating Expenses by Institution for the Five Years Ending June 30, 2015

Institution	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Ann Arbor	\$10,901,616	\$11,299,449	\$13,331,475	Included in Mequon	Included in Mequon
Austin	\$34,033,103	\$35,384,454	\$35,313,707	\$35,911,923	\$36,169,746
Bronxville	\$18,560,379	\$19,871,124	\$21,277,000	\$22,945,473	\$24,704,955
Irvine	\$46,618,505	\$51,398,870	\$55,634,910	\$61,128,972	\$68,956,354
Mequon	\$75,929,397	\$85,998,628	\$76,201,903	\$99,973,550	\$107,466,968
Portland	\$38,347,249	\$44,362,375	\$59,948,294	\$93,690,506	\$138,080,501
River Forest	\$55,377,410	\$58,441,669	\$60,292,000	\$59,620,470	\$60,951,481
Selma	\$39,129,514	\$38,192,991	\$37,997,803	\$42,734,000	\$47,299,855
St. Paul	\$10,900,443	\$11,410,017	\$12,304,846	\$13,032,162	\$11,871,000
Seward	\$28,467,744	\$28,895,593	\$30,205,388	\$31,842,371	\$35,509,354
Total	\$358,265,360	\$385,255,170	\$402,507,326	\$460,879,427	\$531,010,214

Scholarships and Financial Aid by Institution for Five Years Ending June 30, 2015

Institution	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Austin	15,574,474	13,265,334	11,127,952	9,281,911	5,405,994
Bronxville	8,782,200	7,221,592	6,040,399	5,402,515	5,062,720
Irvine	18,676,787	15,272,332	14,168,785	13,413,114	13,321,955
Mequon	35,997,156	24,080,485	21,656,856	19,864,612	17,777,314
Portland	24,756,387	13,630,760	11,308,479	10,277,173	9,328,587
River Forest	16,683,084	15,355,623	14,405,375	13,365,976	11,706,239
St. Paul	1,491,367	1,306,527	1,368,798	1,411,173	1,373,809
Selma	7,197,691	13,034,982	12,014,355	10,621,514	9,627,985
Seward	16,842,185	13,851,502	13,264,290	12,081,466	11,026,713
Total	146,001,331	122,439,544	110,878,127	95,719,454	84,631,316

Church Worker Financial Aid by Institution Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2015

Institution	FY 2014 Total	FY 2014 # of CW	FY 2014 Avg. Aid	FY 2013 Total
Austin	1,276,008	101	12,633	1,382,723
Bronxville	127,470	6	21,078	360,890
Irvine	1,300,306	77	13,419	1,179,799
Mequon	3,030,000	243	12,469	2,882,289
Portland	247,804	18	13,766	150,169
River Forest	3,062,912	181	16,922	3,533,455
Selma	0	0	0	19,030
St. Paul	487,103	49	9,940	522,837
Seward	4,169,885	284	14,682	4,037,490
Total	\$13,701,488	959	\$14,287	\$14,068,682

Goals for the Concordia University System in the Triennium, 2016–2019

Completely dependent on the grace and mercy of the triune God, the Concordia University System seeks to achieve these goals in the coming triennium of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

1. Ensure and defend the freedom of Concordia University System's colleges and universities to teach in accord with the church's confession

and require ethical behavior based on that confession on the part of faculty, staff, and students through full implementation of the "Identity Statement" and its protocols in both on-campus and distance-education programs.

2. Increase the number of church work students by at least one-third through multiple efforts to highlight the rewarding and noble calling of service to Christ and His church in parochial education, public education, and international education. Simultaneously, increase the number of LCMS students by one-third.
3. Enhance the recruitment and development of LCMS faculty by at least 10 percent throughout the system in all program areas and encourage all nonrostered faculty to participate in the colloquy program and thereby increase the number of rostered workers while promoting the training of students through the various graduate programs, especially in education and in other ministry areas.
4. Recommend to all students—whatever religious background—the Reformation truths of *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *sola Scriptura* while challenging materialism, pluralism, rationalism, and other world views 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.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Dean O. Wenthe, *President*

Concordia College Alabama

Concordia College Alabama (CCA) is one of ten colleges and universities of the Concordia University System (CUS) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, dedicated to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to preparing students for lives of meaning and service. As an educational institution of the LCMS, the mission of Concordia College Alabama is to "prepare students through a Christ-centered education for lives of responsible service in the Church, the community, and the world." Therefore, the Christian faith is reflected in its academic programs, services and activities (2013 Res. 5-01A, "To Encourage Continued Faithful Witness by the Concordia University System").

Progress Since 2013

- The Board of Regents approved degree programs in Criminal Justice and Social and Behavioral Sciences, May 2009. The college submitted prospectuses to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) for program approvals within the scope of the college's current accreditation in April 2014. In a letter dated August 12, 2014, the Board of Trustees of SACSCOC approved the programs within the scope of the college's current accreditation. In addition the college also received Board of Regents approval and SACSCOC program accreditation approval for an Associate of Arts in Applied Management and Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration with concentrations in Organizational Leadership and Management Information Systems.
- With the acquisition of the former United Methodist Children's Home, 36 acres, with buildings, were added to the former 17-acre campus and

the college's new master plan is being implemented which has given a much more visible presence on Selma's main north-south highway, Broad Street (US 80).

- Twenty-one capital improvement projects have been completed at a cost of \$2.4 million.
- A capital campaign, with an original goal of \$12 million, has produced \$19.7 million to date (2013 Res. 6-01A, "To Promote Financially Healthy Universities, Seminaries, and Church Workers").
- Significant issues with accreditation status have been repaired. A 10-year accreditation with SACSCOC has been achieved, and the college's 5-year interim review is approved by the commission.
- The Teacher Education program (Early Childhood and Elementary) is fully approved by the Alabama Department of Education to grant licenses—and in fact, the department urges other Alabama colleges to consult with Concordia on how to develop a program that meets standards.
- School districts in the region seek out Concordia students before they graduate; as a result, our placement is 100 percent.
- The Business program does well in competitions among other HBCUs, CUS schools, and others.
- In the past two years, majors in Criminal Justice, Sociology and Behavioral Science, and RN to BSN have been added. The additional offerings provide more choices to potential students.
- A President's Advisory Council has been organized; one of its first actions was to initiate the strategic planning process.
- The college is midway in development of a 5-year Strategic Plan, accompanied by a 5-year Business Plan that would clarify financial feasibility. Campus Strategic Solutions, Inc., is the consultant.
- In a money-saving endeavor at the recommendation of the President, the board adopted on December 17, 2015, a motion to discontinue intercollegiate football as of the 2016–17 school year. Savings are projected to range from \$320,000 to \$590,000, depending upon the number of students who would not be enrolled. (If a football student does not re-enroll, some money may still be expended as to a nonfootball student, but football expenditures would be reduced.)
- During the week of March 1–8, 2015, the college hosted a Civil Rights Symposium and other activities in conjunction with the City of Selma's Bridge Crossing Jubilee commemorating the 50th year anniversary of "Bloody Sunday" and the signing of the Voters Rights Act of 1965. The event received national attention. Record numbers of people visited the city and participated in the week-long activities held in the city and on the college's campus. The college was also host to a group of students from different parts of the country who lived on campus and participated in the activities.
- The film premiere of the docudrama of Concordia College Alabama's founder, Dr. Rosa Jinsey Young, entitled *The First Rosa: Teacher, Confessor, Church Planter*, was held during the June 4–5, 2015, convention of the LCMS Southern District on the campus. Dr. Young helped found Alabama Lutheran Academy and College in 1922, later to be renamed Concordia College Alabama. The film was written, produced, and directed by Rev. Dr. Ardon Albrecht. Dr. Young is known as "the mother of black Lutheranism." During her lifetime she was instrumental in starting schools and Lutheran congregations throughout central Alabama. In her autobiography, *Light in the Dark Belt*, she demonstrated what was to become her life's vocation, "service to others." Through Dr. Young's untiring efforts and the efforts of those she inspired, Concordia College Alabama serves as a confessional example of "the joyous praise of the Lord for His glorious gifts and the salvation of many" (Matt. 11:25; Rom. 15:9ff.; 1 John 1:1–4; 2013 Res. 3-09, "To Continue to Support and Promote Black Ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod").

Financial Circumstances and Challenges

- Alabama is ranked 49th among 50 states in quality of education.
- Many families in this part of the country still suffer from educational, as well as cultural, segregation. While the public schools are integrated, many private schools have been formed—from which blacks are often

excluded. CCA receives applications from graduates of these public schools.

- The Lord has placed us in Selma, Alabama, for a reason. Even though it is a challenging community in which to attract students, CCA continues to affirm that the Lord has neither abandoned nor forgotten those born into poverty in this region, and our faithfulness in service provides hope that there is a pathway to hope and service to others.

Alongside efforts expended to accomplish the matters delineated above in the Progress section, the majority of administrator and board time is spent on finances. Average annual unrestricted gifts for the past five years is \$4.6 million, with a range of \$2.5 million to \$7 million needed to operate business at CCA.

Each year Concordia needs an additional \$2–3 million of unrestricted gifts to balance its operating budget. The college is extremely dependent upon such gifts and the Line of Credit. Until these gifts are greatly increased, the college will require additional financial support. All the attempts to depend on tuition revenue, as most of the CUS schools do, is not feasible in Alabama as our student demographic and economic disparity will not support such a business plan.

Our goal is to connect this great mission post to the LCMS congregations and members so that the mission of the church that started 94 years ago will continue.

Tilahun Mendedo, *President*

Concordia College—New York

As is our custom, below find Concordia College—New York's update to the 2016 triennial Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

I. Description: Founded in 1881, Concordia College—New York (CCNY), an affiliate of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and member of the Concordia University System (CUS), engages and nurtures a diverse student body in a Christ-centered, value-oriented, liberal arts education for lives of service to church and community. Concordia has again been recognized as a College of Distinction, and is in the top 5 of *U.S. News & World Report's* colleges in Ethnic Diversity in the North Region, retaining its identity as one of the most diverse colleges in the United States.

II. Goals: In 2015, the college updated its strategic plan, "Advancing the Journey," with the seven following goals:

- Redouble our commitment to our identity as a Lutheran Christian institution of higher education;
- Expand nontraditional and graduate level academic offerings and strengthen related infrastructure;
- Evaluate and strengthen or restructure on-the-ground traditional undergraduate academic and nonacademic programs;
- Build on our existing capacities as a small, diverse, and supportive institution as a means to increase student enrollment and retention;
- Improve advancement and development results;
- Invest in our human resources;
- Make targeted capital and operational investments to enhance academic programs, student life, and college infrastructure while reducing resource allocation in lower priority activities.

III. Assessment of the college's involvement with the church and its environment.

- Specific ways in which Concordia College—New York has served and responded to the needs of:
- Congregations.* Several of the college's faculty serve in congregations of the Atlantic District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (AD-LCMS). Moreover, the college works closely with Village Lutheran Church (VLC), Bronxville, NY, the congregation which serves as official sponsor to the college's Wednesday Eucharist service. The college and VLC also share multiple expense and infra-

structural items.

- ii. *Professional church workers.* The college has been hard at work responding to requests from our local district (AD-LCMS) and districts of the East Coast Association of Congregations (ECAC), which includes the New England District, the New Jersey District, the Eastern District, the Atlantic District, the Southeastern District, and the Florida-Georgia District.

1. *Diaconate.* In 2015, the college launched a diaconate program, utilizing a program developed by the AD-LCMS, and offered to congregations across the ECAC;
2. *D.Min.* The college has been in talks with Concordia Seminary to offer a customized D.Min. degree, with emphases on urban ministry, to our ECAC church-work population;
3. *Scholarships for Church Work Development.* The college has put significant resources behind its effort to attract and develop church workers. In FY 2014, the college offered over \$4,000 more in scholarship monies than the next-nearest CUS institution to church-work students (\$21,078 per student vs. \$16,922 per student (Concordia University Chicago). The college's Enrollment Department continues to make outreach to church workers an institutional priority;
4. *Lutheran Schools.* The college continues its support for the Lutheran Schools Association of Greater New York (LSS-NY) and hosted its annual meeting this past year. The college's Education Division also works closely with the Chapel School (of Village Lutheran Church, Bronxville, NY) in preparing elementary and middle-school teachers. The college also works closely with Martin Luther High School (MLHS), Maspeth, Queens, to offer "dual credit" coursework at low cost to MLHS students.

- iii. *Districts.* The President of the AD-LCMS, Rev. Derek G. Lecakes, serves as a member of the college's Board of Regents. Moreover, the district's offices are housed on Concordia's campus. The college offers financial support for the district's annual Witness in the Public Square luncheon/fund-raiser, hosts the district's Festival of Workshops, and cooperates on multiple additional ministry ventures.

- iv. *Mission areas.* The college is actively engaged in multiple ministry ventures. The college's Homeless Ministry to New York City, which has been a vital component of our campus ministry, continued strong in 2014–2015. In 2015, we also sent many students to the annual Beautiful Feet Mission Conference at Concordia University, Nebraska. Rev. Dr. Joshua Hollmann, Campus Chaplain, organized mission trips to Nicaragua and Haiti.

- v. *Overseas partner churches.* Rev. Dr. Joshua Hollmann continues his work in serving and developing partnerships with overseas partner churches. For the past two summers, Dr. Hollmann has traveled to the Philippines, where he has worked with the Lutheran Theological Seminary and Training Center, Baguio City, Philippines. In 2015, he also worked with the Lutheran seminary in Haiti. The college also continues its relationship with Japan Lutheran College, which regularly sends students to study at CCNY.

Conclusion

While the college continues to struggle to attract and retain Lutheran faculty, staff, and students, we are proud of the lengths to which we have gone to do so—and of the successes we have had. Relative to the number of Lutherans in our region, Concordia College–New York regularly outperforms most of our fellow Concordia University System partners in attracting a Lutheran student population. We continue to make this a top institutional priority.

We are also very proud of the efforts we have made to partner with our fellow members of the Concordia University System. In 2014, we launched a partnership with Concordia University Portland (CUP) and Concordia University, Nebraska (CUNE) to develop and deliver online and graduate programs. That partnership has yielded

significant benefits to the college. Moreover, the institutions have committed in the year to come to collaborate in strengthening and enhancing our common commitment to Lutheran identity.

In 2015, our Theology Department crafted a new Lutheran identity statement: "An Affirmation of our Lutheran Identity and Heritage." The entire statement (which can be found here: www.concordia-nj.edu/about/documents/OurIdentity.pdf) affirms that, "as Saint Augustine voices, our hearts are restless until they find significance and wholeness in God. At Concordia College–New York, Christ-centered education and vocation are realized in our students who come from around the world and right next door."

The statement concludes:

In the daily intersections of classroom and chapel, playing field and lab, fieldwork and clinicals, the commons and the dorms, we seek to guide our students in the discovery of who Jesus is and why he matters as they learn to navigate our diverse world. Our Lutheran identity at Concordia College–New York is articulated in our Christ-centered commitment to faith and reason, service and scholarship, vocation and diversity.

With fervent prayer and hope, we at Concordia College–New York look to a future of commitment to Christ-centered teaching and learning, in service to God through service to others.

In Christ,

Viji George, *President*

Concordia University Chicago

As a distinctive, comprehensive university of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and based in the liberal arts, Concordia University Chicago (CUC) equips men and women to serve and lead with integrity, creativity, competence, and compassion in a diverse, interconnected, and increasingly urbanized church and world.

- The university celebrated the installation of the Rev. Dr. Daniel L. Gard, 11th president of CUC, at the August 2014 Opening Services.
- In October 2014, the CUC community concluded a year-long series of events and initiatives commemorating the university's 150th anniversary and its 100th year located in River Forest, Illinois. The events included the release of the book *Faithfully Onward, Ever Upward*. The president's official inauguration event and gala culminated with Homecoming and Founder's Day weekend.
- For the seventh consecutive year, combined undergraduate and graduate enrollment has exceeded 5,000 students.
- Lutheran teacher education, deaconess, director of Christian education, and pre-seminary form the foundation for the university's long-standing church professional programs. The deaconess program—the only undergraduate program offered among the Concordia colleges—celebrates its 35th anniversary.
- Expansion of the university's director of Christian education and deaconess programs allows students to earn a minor in nine fields, including nonprofit management, social work, and global studies, allowing students to better serve the church and their communities.
- At its May 2015 meeting, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) approved continued accreditation of CUC through 2023—the maximum reaffirmation of accreditation awarded to post-secondary institutions. The university's establishment of a strong foundation for maintaining its continuous improvement efforts with the implementation of quality-focused Academic Quality Improvement Program action projects was lauded by the HLC.
- The Chronicle of Higher Education's 2015 *Almanac* named Concordia Chicago the 12th-fastest-growing campus among non-profit master's-degree-granting institutions in the United States during the 10-year period from 2003 to 2013.

- The Board of Regents has approved the CUC Foundation to move forward with securing the necessary financial resources for the construction of a new state-of-the-art residence hall.
- The university continues to strengthen its international enrollment through a partnership with the Hebei University of Economics and Business in Shijiazhuang, China, and the establishment of Concordia Dalian China.
- The Council for the Accreditation of Education Programs (CAEP) has provided national recognition for the Master of Arts in School Leadership—Principal Preparation and the EdD/PhD in Educational Leadership—District Leadership, Superintendent Preparation, which places the programs in the top 2 percent of all graduate education programs nationally, rated for program quality and support of national standards.
- The university was named to the US President's Higher Education Community Service honor roll for the sixth time. This is the highest federal recognition a college or university can receive for its commitment to volunteering, service learning, and civic engagement. Approximately 59 percent of CUC students gave back to the community during the 2013–14 school year through 11,426 service hours.
- The Hispanic-Serving Institutions Center for Policy and Practice (HSICP²) named the university as an Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution in 2014–15. Twenty-four percent of undergraduates identify as Hispanic; this recognition reflects the university's commitment to serving an increasingly diverse student body.
- In October 2015, a team of three undergraduate computer science students earned first place in the Chicago IEEEExtreme 24-Hour Programming Competition, besting students in master's and doctoral programs from other area universities.
- A collaborative program with Orchard Place Elementary School in Des Plaines, Illinois, promotes college awareness at a young age and encourages all students, regardless of socioeconomic or other challenges, to set goals for college. Nine CUC alumni are also teachers at Orchard Place. More than 250 students, parents, and educators have participated in this college-bound program in its sixth year at the university.
- Tomorrow's Promise, a nationally recognized, innovative partnership between a local public school district, Fifth Third Bank, and CUC resulted in the enrollment of 12 recent high school graduates in fall 2015 who were guided and mentored since sixth grade. These students, from underserved communities, receive financial and educational support throughout the program and are recipients of scholarships and grants provided by the bank and CUC, which cover four years of tuition, fees, and room and board.
- Three differentiating initiatives—focused on meeting societal and intergenerational needs globally in the fields of early childhood education, literacy, and gerontology—were adopted as key components of the university's strategic plan.
- The Center for Gerontology pioneered several programs for community members in 2015 including Aging Well Initiatives for 55+, Memory Loss Initiatives, Christian Home Health Care, and Gerontology Consultancy. Dr. John Holton, former director of the Illinois Department on Aging, was named as director of the center.
- The Center for Literacy, established as a regional hub for the research and practice of literacy, serves youth and adults throughout the Chicago region by providing innovative and meaningful reading and comprehension teaching methods. Since 2014, 1,300 students (K–12) have taken part in programming, and 100 area educators have attended professional development sessions.
- The university opened a state-of-the-art fitness center that serves as a training facility for student athletes and provides a unique academic experience for students pursuing degrees in the field of human performance.
- In spring 2014, the Wind Symphony toured in China, performing before audiences in Beijing, Xi'an, Hangzhou, and Shanghai. They were also invited to perform at New York City's Carnegie Hall as the "showcase ensemble" of the New York Wind Band Festival. The group will tour South Africa in 2017.
- Kapelle, the university's premier choral ensemble, toured Poland in spring 2015, performing sacred, contemporary, and traditional music for Polish audiences. Kapelle also performed at Chicago Symphony Center, home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, in April 2015.
- The regional Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival invited The Artists of Concordia Theatre, the university's theater-production wing, to present productions for two consecutive years: "In the Soundless Awe" in 2013 and "Roustabout: The Great Circus Train Wreck!" in 2014.
- Dr. Michelle Morkert became the university's seventh faculty member to be named as a Fulbright Scholar. From September 2014 through January 2015, Morkert taught two interdisciplinary courses at the University of Zadar in Croatia as part of its American studies program.
- The Early Childhood Education Center, which holds distinguished laboratory school status, received reaccreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
- In collaboration with the LCMS Office of International Mission, the university hosted 14 LCMS church leaders from Asia eager to experience an LCMS university and the educational experience of its students.
- With the addition of men's and women's lacrosse in 2015–16, the university's newest NCAA-level sports, the number of intercollegiate sports programs reached 19.
- More than 1,000 students, teachers, and parents from Lutheran schools in the LCMS Northern Illinois District participated in "Planting the Seeds of Mercy" 2015 Youth Rally in October 2015, held on campus.
- National professional and semi-professional athletic teams across the US—including the Chicago Cubs, Chicago Bears, Minnesota Timberwolves, Chicago Sky, Chicago Bandits softball, Frisco Rangers baseball, and the World Triathlon Corp (Ironman)—are employers to several CUC alumni fulfilling exciting careers in marketing, broadcasting, public relations, and community outreach.
- Illinois's prestigious Golden Apple Foundation honored its 14th CUC education alum with the Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching. In addition, 21 CUC students have taken part or are currently in the program as Golden Apple Scholars.
- Joe Jacoby, a 13-year National Football League all-pro offensive lineman and member of three Washington Redskins Super Bowl championship teams, serves as the offensive line coach for the university's football team and was a nominee for induction to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2015 and 2016.
- Underserved middle and high school students from the Chicago region participated in a successful Youth Robotics Camp in which they assembled, programmed, and debugged LEGO Mindstorms EV3 and NTX robotics kits. In addition to learning the key mathematics skills to achieve the basic concepts behind their designs, students interacted with and learned from CUC alumni and others with successful careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields.
- In 2015 and 2016, students participating in CUC's Alternative Spring Break program provided nearly 800 hours of service for churches, schools, and Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Charleston, South Carolina.
- Dr. Benjamin Boche, assistant professor of education, was awarded the STAND With Your Community grant by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This grant, provided in celebration of

the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, will fund a literacy project entitled Uniting Church, School, and Community.

All of us in the Concordia Chicago community are blessed to be servants of God, and we thank Him for continued blessings for our students, staff, and faculty.

Daniel L. Gard, *President*

Concordia University, Irvine

Mission Statement

Concordia University, Irvine, guided by the Great Commission of Christ Jesus and the Lutheran Confessions, empowers students through the liberal arts and professional studies for lives of learning, service, and leadership.

Vision Statement

Concordia University, Irvine, will be among the finest, distinctively Lutheran liberal arts universities in America, preparing wise, honorable, cultivated citizens, informed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for the Church and world.

University updates for 2016 *Convention Workbook*:

- Concordia is the seventeenth fastest-growing private Master's degree-granting university in the US, according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Concordia's enrollment grew from 4,046 students to 4,560 students in the last three years.
- In the last three years, Concordia added the following academic programs:
 - AA—General Education Degree (Online/Blended)
 - BA in Liberal Arts (Online/Blended)
 - BA in Business Administration and Leadership (Online/Blended)
 - BA in Healthcare Management (Traditional and Online/Blended)
 - BA in Organizational Psychology (Online/Blended)
 - BA in Nonprofit Leadership (Online/Blended)
 - MA in Education Administration (Online)
 - MS in Nursing (Online/Blended)
 - MA in Healthcare Administration (Online/Blended)
 - MA in Educational Technology (Online)
 - MA in International Studies—Africa (Traditional/Online)
- In the fall of 2013, Concordia initiated its first doctoral program, an EdD in Educational Leadership. Currently, 75 doctoral students are enrolled in the program.
- Concordia is transitioning its athletic affiliation from the NAIA to the NCAA Division II. Full NCAA affiliation should be realized at the beginning of the 2017–2018 school year.
- Recently, Concordia was awarded a \$540,000 Lilly Foundation grant to support a series of Theology Institutes for high school youth beginning in the summer of 2016. The Institutes will engage high school students in the application of Lutheran theology to contemporary social issues.
- Concordia established a Great Commission Institute to help the university achieve its mission to train students, faculty, and staff to “make disciples of all nations.” The Institute also serves the church-at-large by acting as a think tank on such challenging issues as communicating the Gospel across ethnic, generational, cultural, national, and other boundaries, whether natural or humanly constructed, that exist between the people of God.
- Concordia completed its campus master plan and is now working to obtain building permits from the City of Irvine for initial projects: construction of the Music, Worship, and Theology building; renovation and expansion of the CU Center for Worship and the Performing Arts; additional parking and internal roadway improvements; establishment of the Keck Astronomy Center; installation of competition-level sand volleyball courts; and other athletic and student amenity upgrades.
- Concordia's Board of Regents adopted and implemented an up-to-date Policy Manual to direct its activities and clarify its role in University governance.
- CUI hosted its fourth annual Teen Entrepreneur Academy, which drew 100 high school students from Asia and the United States to learn more about starting their own businesses and compete for a \$1,000 prize for best business plan. Over 300 high school students have participated in the annual business summer camp academy.
- CUI hosted the first annual Kid Entrepreneur Academy summer day camp for kids in grades 5–8. The kids learned principles of business and business start-up strategies. Fifty kids participated.
- CUI became the host university for the Association for Core Texts and Courses and its Liberal Arts Institute.
- CUI freshmen scored in the top 10 percent of freshmen in the country in nearly every indicator of academic engagement in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).
- University Advancement received several recognitions from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) based on three years of fundraising data, including the 2016 Best Practices in Fundraising (Gold) award and the 2015 Education Fundraising Award for Overall Performance.
- The Concordia University Irvine Endowment has more than doubled in recent years, growing from \$12.2 million at the end of Fiscal Year 2012 to \$26.2 million at the end of Fiscal Year 2015. In addition, \$6.4 million in estate pledges have been recorded since the end of Fiscal Year 2012.
- More than 200 volunteers are actively involved with the university, serving on boards and councils and supporting our key special events, including our annual Gala of Stars celebration.
- Concordia recently received a Keck Foundation grant of \$250,000 to support astronomy projects on and off campus.
- In 2014, CUI was reaccredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for the maximum term of 10 years. A number of CUI faculty and staff have been invited to speak at several WASC annual conferences in the last two years to present the university's exemplary work in accreditation and assessment to colleagues at peer institutions (public and private) in the western US.
- CUI now employs more than 150 full-time faculty, more than 300 part-time faculty, and more than 200 support staff, who serve more than 4,500 students annually.
- Nineteen current and former CUI faculty, staff, and regents collaborated on a book entitled *The Idea and Practice of a Christian University*, edited by CUI Assistant Provost Scott Ashmon and published by Concordia Publishing House in 2015. The book examines the interaction of faith and learning in many dimensions of Lutheran higher education and is intended to inspire broader dialogue in the Christian higher education community.

Kurt J. Krueger, *President*

Concordia University Nebraska

Greetings from Concordia University, Nebraska, where we continue to equip 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 66th Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and our mutual efforts to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

During the last triennium, Concordia transitioned from executing one strategic plan to developing and implementing another. Highlights

regarding the plans, the university's goals, outcomes, and focuses for the future include:

Fulfillment of 2015 Strategic Plan

The university's strategic plan leading up to 2015 included tactics to help Concordia achieve a key outcome: GROW. To meet its goal, Concordia:

- Expanded efforts to develop new programs and co-curricular offerings that enabled increased recruitment of students from a wider demographic population with new characteristics and talents.
- Collaborated with new partners including Concordia Online Education and area community colleges.
- Adapted to a changing environment by delivering dual-credit programs to high school students, expanding wireless technology, becoming a 1:1 iPad school in the College of Education, and offering graduate programs completely online.
- Remained faithful to our Lutheran faith and commitments while providing a Christ-centered higher education and adjusting to significant economic changes and challenges.

In January 2015, the Board of Regents launched a new strategic plan focused on maximizing the momentum gained by the university's growth over the last five years. The plan, in effect until 2020, also has a key outcome: THRIVE.

To meet this outcome, Concordia will focus on a new vision to help guide its steps, direct its energies, and allocate its resources. The new vision is: "Concordia University, Nebraska will be a thriving Lutheran university that engages students in dynamic, life-shaping learning experiences and relationships as they discover, pursue, and realize their vocational callings."

Leaders and members of the Concordia community, including regents, foundation directors, alumni, faculty, staff, and students, are working on action plans to fulfill the focus areas of the current five-year vision.

Progress on 2020 Strategic Plan

Concordia's total student enrollment for 2015–16 is the largest in its history, pushing the total head count of undergraduate, graduate, and dual credit students served beyond 2,600. For the second year in a row (2014–15 and 2015–16), Concordia has experienced double-digit growth of its incoming undergraduate class.

Concordia continues to expand its undergraduate programs. In the last triennium:

- K–12 special education was added as a major. Special education was previously only available as an endorsement.
- Concordia became the first university in Nebraska to offer a Chinese teaching endorsement for education students in the Mandarin Chinese program.
- Concordia's social sciences department expanded the criminal justice program to offer a bachelor of arts degree in criminal justice. The academic area was previously only offered as a minor.
- Teaching English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL) was added as a master's and bachelor's degree program.

Concordia is developing international partnerships to serve a new demographic of student with unique undergraduate higher education needs. The university has also launched an Intensive English Program to serve students who desire to learn English in order to enter university study in English, or who want to take their English skills to a higher level.

Concordia aligned its academic programs to enhance its College of Education. Effective July 1, 2015, the college became the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences. The new college is organized in a way that supports majors, minors, department, and opportunities for students whose call to service is to help people. The college

is now one of three colleges, alongside Concordia's College of Arts and Sciences and College of Graduate Studies and Adult Education.

The College of Graduate Studies and Adult Education is increasing its delivery options to include on-ground, online, hybrid, and fast-track options for students. The college offers on-ground classes at its campus in the Fallbrook area of Lincoln, as well as in Omaha. It also provides online classes through and is a participating university in Concordia Online Education, a partnership among Concordia University, Nebraska; Concordia University Portland; and Concordia College—New York.

The College of Graduate Studies and Adult Education has expanded its academic programs to include the following degrees, with dozens of concentrations and endorsements available to students:

- Master of Science in Athletics Administration
- Master of Business Administration
- Master of Computer Information Systems
- Master of Education
- Master of Healthcare Administration
- Master of Human Services
- Master of Public Health
- RN to BSN

Concordia continues to equip future leaders and servants for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

- Concordia placed nearly 215 graduates as Lutheran teachers, directors of Christian education and directors of parish music during the past three years.
- Concordia serves approximately 40 to 45 preseminary students each year in preparation for the pastoral ministry.
- Based on 2014–15 statistics, 24 percent of LCMS church workers, including 21 percent of directors of Christian education and 28 percent of commissioned teachers, graduated from Concordia University, Nebraska.
- Concordia partners with 132 Congregations for Concordia University, Nebraska (CCUNE). Formerly Nebraska Association of Congregations for Concordia (NACC), CCUNE equips students from our member LCMS congregations by enabling them to obtain a Christ-centered, Lutheran education while preparing for their vocational callings. All enrolled students from member congregations—regardless of their academic disciplines—will receive a \$1,000 scholarship during the 2016–17 academic year.
- Partnerships with LCMS high schools in the Midwest give students unique benefits to continuing their Lutheran education beyond high school.
- During the year prior to October 2017, the university will host a series of celebration events to raise awareness of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and how it relates to our Lutheran faith and role as a Lutheran institution of higher education.

The university received tremendous financial support from thousands of alumni and friends who believe in our mission, our students, and the ministry we are doing every day. We saw this support most visibly at the conclusion of the 66-month *Blessed to be a Blessing* campaign on December 31, 2014, with an amazing 12,000 donors who made 40,000 gifts and generously provided \$42.3 million during the campaign.

Recognition of Progress

- Concordia has attained a top-50 spot in the "Best Regional Universities—Midwest" category of *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Colleges rankings for the last two years. For 2015–16 Concordia Nebraska ranked #44 in its category. Concordia has been ranked in the top tier of the annual report for 13 consecutive years. In addition, Concordia is the highest ranked of all schools in the Concordia University System.

- Concordia was honored as a College of Distinction for the 2015–16 academic year. Concordia is one of only five institutions from Nebraska to receive this award and is the only Christian College of Distinction in the state.
- Concordia was a top-25 school (#23) in “The 50 Most Affordable Private Colleges” category of *MONEY* magazine’s rankings for 2015.
- Compiling the results of over 1.4 million student reviews from more than 2,000 colleges and universities, the 2015 Cappies™ honored America’s top 25 favorite schools across multiple categories. Concordia ranked #9 on the list of Best College Dorms and #19 on the list of Safest College Campuses.
- Concordia ranks as the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics’ (NAIA) all-time leader in the number of Daktronics-NAIA Scholar-Athletes, with 1,153 and counting following a fall 2015 total of 39 Scholar-Athletes. In addition, Concordia is, as of December 31, 2015, the only NAIA institution with more than 1,000 Scholar-Athletes all-time.

An Unchanging Mission

Our mission, “Concordia University, Nebraska is an excellent academic and Christ-centered community equipping men and women for lives of learning, service and leadership in the church and world,” remains the cornerstone for our identity and existence as an institution. We remain dedicated to carrying it out, and by God’s grace we will do so faithfully.

Brian L. Friedrich, *President*

Concordia University, Portland

Greetings LCMS National Convention Colleagues,

Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, and its community of students, faculty, staff, neighbors, and partners were blessed in so many ways these past few years. We know these blessings flow powerfully from God’s grace to us in Jesus Christ. As a community, we affirmed our mission to prepare leaders for the transformation of society; along with our core themes of Lutheran, Rigor, and Servant Leadership; and our Vision 2024.

As an institution of higher education, we recognize God’s call that we be good neighbors. We asked “Who are our neighbors?” and “What do they need?” The answer was clear that we must model the Good Samaritan in our own backyard and around the world. As a result, many new doors opened to serving God’s children.

Thank you for allowing us to share some of the following exciting highlights with you:

- As part of its community engagement efforts, the university is trailblazing a new national education model called 3 to PhD® which aims to create safer, healthier, and more educated communities. The initiative includes a public-private partnership with Portland Public Schools and Trillium Family Services, and involves development of a new \$48 million facility to open in Fall 2017. The facility will include Faubion School PK–8 Title I, Concordia’s College of Education, and wrap-around services for children and families, including: an early childhood education, health and wellness programs, STEAM (science, technology engineering, arts and math), and Maker Spaces, as well as one-on-one tutors, mentors, and coaches from Concordia (www.3toPhD.org).
- The 110-year partnerships between Concordia and congregations throughout the Pacific Northwest continued to grow and deepen. Concordia’s commitment to campus spiritual life led to calling the Rev. Wes “Bo” Baumeister to serve as our new campus pastor beginning in summer 2015. The Rev. Dr. Paul W. Mueller continues, since 2011, as the executive director of the Art & Carol Wahlers Center for Applied Lutheran Leadership (CALL).
- Student enrollment more than doubled between 2013 and 2015—from 3,500 to 7,300.

- CU’s most recent growth can be attributed to its clear 2024 Vision, the strength of the academic programs, experienced faculty, new academic programs, rapid expansion of our online M.Ed. and Ed.D. degrees, and growing athletics from NAIA to NCAA Division II, all in an environment that fosters spiritual growth.
- Concordia Portland became the largest private university in Oregon according to *The Oregonian*, *Oregon Business* magazine, and the *Portland Business Journal*, and continued to be recognized as the fastest-growing university in Oregon.
- Concordia Portland held its first Commencement Ceremonies outside the U.S., in both American Samoa and, most recently, Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2015 and 2016 at which more than 90 graduates received their M.Ed. degrees.
- Concordia’s nursing bachelor’s degree earned national accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), and the School of Management earned national Accreditation Council for Business Schools & Programs (ACBSP).
- The university was recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* for offering one of the top online Master of Education (M.Ed.) programs in the nation in the first-ever ranking of online graduate programs.

- The Concordia University Foundation continues to grow and raise more scholarship dollars than ever before. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to continue to assist the 97 percent of our students who need tuition support.
- The university earned a prestigious Lilly Endowment four-year grant for \$600K to support the creation of a summer High School Institute for Social Impact & Leadership Development, which is currently under development.
- Concordia continues to make an even more concentrated commitment to community engagement and community partnerships, promoting Law School Dean Cathy Silak to the University’s VP of Community Engagement and continuing to be recognized on the *U.S. President’s Community Service Honor Roll* for the sixth year in a row. *Washington Monthly* ranks Concordia University 16th nationally in “Community Service Participation and hours served.”
- After opening the Concordia University System’s first law school, the Concordia University School of Law earned American Bar Association provisional accreditation and graduated its first students in 2015. Concordia University School of Law is the only three-year law school located in the state capital of Boise, Idaho’s vibrant downtown, just a few blocks away from the Idaho State Supreme Court and Capitol Building.
- Following the 2012 opening of Hilken Community Stadium for baseball and soccer, Concordia continued its athletic accomplishments, including earning a national women’s soccer championship, hiring new athletic director Brian Jamros, and making the move to NCAA Division II (GNAC Conference), in which the university is now competing.

We are incredibly grateful for God’s many blessings and for the overwhelming support of our university church partners, friends, alumni, donors, and community. Thank you for your partnership in ministry, for being such a valued part of our Concordia family!

For His students,

Charles E. Schlimpert, *President*

Concordia University, St. Paul

- As an academic institution, Concordia University St. Paul is guided by three foundational statements:
 - Mission: *The mission of Concordia University St. Paul, a university of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is to prepare students for thoughtful and informed living, for dedicated service to God and humanity, and for enlightened care of God’s creation, all within the context of the Christian Gospel.*

- Vision: *The vision of Concordia University St. Paul is to be acknowledged as the leading Lutheran university offering exceptional opportunities for students from all backgrounds who seek relevant career preparation and a challenging academic experience coupled with the insights of Lutheran theology.*
 - Promise to students: *Concordia University St. Paul empowers you to discover and engage your purpose for life, career, and service in a dynamic, multicultural, urban environment where Christ is honored, all are welcome, and Lutheran convictions inform intellectual inquiry and academic pursuits.*
 - During the triennium, Concordia implemented the first three years of a five-year strategic plan directed at achieving the mission, informed by the vision and promise. The planning horizon commenced July 1, 2013, and will end June 30, 2018. Four strategic goals frame the plan:
 - Grow enrollment. During the past three years, total enrollment has grown by 49 percent, from 2,941 students in Fall semester 2012 to 4,380 students in Fall 2015. Growth has been achieved in all three categories of students: traditional undergraduate, nontraditional undergraduate, and graduate.
 - Increase persistence to graduation. During the past three years, retention and persistence to graduation has increased by several percentage points in each category of students. In the spring of 2015, Concordia University St. Paul graduated a record 1,263 students.
 - Strengthen transitions to jobs and graduate school. Improved systems for tracking students' post-graduation transitions have indicated increased effectiveness in employment of graduates in their chosen field, and admission to first and second choice graduate schools. The university continues to place 100 percent of its mobile minister of religion—commissioned graduates into ministry settings, and 100 percent of its preministry graduates have been accepted into their first-choice seminary.
- Grow net assets. During the most recent three fiscal years (2013, 2014, 2015), total net assets grew by 51.4 percent, from \$57.1 million at the end of FY2012 to \$86.5 million at the end of FY2015. Growth was achieved through positive operating results, reduction of long-term debt, and increased value of invested assets and property.
- Growth in enrollment has been achieved largely through an increased number of academic programs, aggressive pricing models, and enhanced marketing efforts. Specific financial aid offerings are provided for members of congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and include the Lutheran heritage scholarship for all LCMS undergraduate and graduate students, the *Twelve Disciples Scholarship*, a full-tuition scholarship for highly qualified students preparing for a church vocation, and a 50 percent tuition gift-aid guarantee for any student preparing for a church vocation who meets the university's admission requirements.
 - Concordia continues to be recognized as one of the most racially and ethnically diverse Lutheran institutions of higher education in the world, with 36 percent of total enrollment students of color, and over 150 international students from 12 countries. The university houses the Center for Hmong studies on its campus and hosted the 5th biennial International Conference on Hmong Studies in 2014.
 - Concordia is recognized as a premier university serving the needs of veterans and active-duty military personnel. Over 200 students with military experience are enrolled at the university. In 2015, Concordia named its veterans resource center the *General John W. Vessey Veterans Resource Center*.
 - The number of tenure-track faculty grew from 57 to 70 during the triennium, including additions in biology and chemistry, business administration, education, health sciences and kinesiology, mathematics, music, and theology. Four LCMS-rostered ministers of religion joined the faculty in Academic Year 2016: Rev. Mark Koschmann as Instructor in Missiology and Director of the Hoffmann Institute; DCE Heath Lewis as Instructor of Christian Education and coordinator of the Director of Christian Education

program; Dr. Matt Buns as Assistant Professor of Kinesiology and Health; and Dr. Marilyn Reineck as Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

- Concordia launched the following new degree programs during the triennium:
 - Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN)
 - Bachelor of Science (BS) in Computer Science
 - B.S. in Orthotics and Prosthetics
 - Master of Science (MS) in Exercise Science
 - MS in Information Technology
 - MS in Orthotics and Prosthetics
 - Master of Business Administration (MBA) with certificate in Cyber Security
 - Education Specialist (EDS)
 - Doctorate in Education (EDD)
 - Doctorate in Physical Therapy (DPT)
- Concordia's women's volleyball team, led by Head Coach Brady Starke, won an unprecedented seventh straight NCAA Division II National Championship in 2013 and the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference (NSIC) title in 2015. Among all student athletes, 16 Concordia athletes were named All-American and 6 were named Academic All-Americans. Concordia graduate Zach Moore ('14) became the first Golden Bear to be drafted into the National Football League, and won a Super Bowl ring in 2015 as a member of the New England Patriots.
- During academic year 2018–19, Concordia University will observe the 125th anniversary of the founding of the institution in 1893, and has submitted a memorial to this convention requesting an offering of praise and thanksgiving for the blessings of almighty God over the past century and a quarter.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Ries, *President*

Concordia University Texas

Concordia University Texas (CTX), an institution of Lutheran higher education affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, has been operating since 1926 under its mission of “Developing Christian Leaders.” Located in Austin, Texas, the school moved in 2008 from its original downtown 25-acre campus to the west side of Austin, where it now occupies 400 acres, including a 250-acre federally protected preserve. The following is a list of highlights that have built and shaped CTX since the 2013 convention.

- Total enrollment has held steady over this time, with an increase in the traditional population over the past several years. The current academic year (fall 2015) began with a total of 2,570 students (1,721 undergraduate/849 graduate).
- The first new structure since moving to the new campus went into operation January 2016—a softball field. This was the first structure built on the current campus that allowed for something that was not possible on the historic campus. This structure was partially funded by two very generous donors.
- A legacy gift of \$1.5 million was given to the university for the construction of a chapel and place of worship. No plans are in place yet, but it will be one of the first buildings constructed in the near future.
- Partnering with an outside vendor, CTX has grown its online student population from 150 in January 2015 to more than 600 in January 2016. Programs in education, business, nursing, computer science, and criminal justice are all a part of the online offerings.
- A presidential transition took place in the summer of 2014 as Dr. Tom Cedel retired after 12 years as president. Dr. Donald Christian was announced as interim president and CEO by the board in May

2014 and assumed the position on August 1 of that year. On June 12, 2015, the board of regents, working closely with the Concordia University System Board of Directors, removed the interim title and elected Dr. Christian as the 12th president and CEO of CTX.

- CTX completely and fully passed the five-year review of its accreditation body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in May 2013. This rigorous review sets it up for its reaffirmation of accreditation in spring of 2018.
- Under its new leadership, CTX went through a lengthy strategic planning process over the past year. Its new vision is that by 2026, Concordia University Texas will be the premier university where the adventure of faith, learning, and life-changing experiences leads to meaningful work. As a result, the newly named Center for Vocation and Professional Development has received several grants that will allow focused work with individual students to help determine vocation and career paths. There, students can also receive mentoring from alumni and community leaders.
- In 2013, the CTX faculty adopted a new core curriculum which helps students focus on the question of identity with God, self, others, and the world. One special factor in the curriculum points toward the students' engagement with nature, focusing on the 400-acre preserve that surrounds the CTX campus.
- After having received approval from both SACSCOC and the CUS, Concordia University Texas will offer its first-ever doctoral program beginning in fall of 2016. The EdD will provide several tracks, including curriculum and instruction and educational leadership.
- CTX hosted the Concordia-wide Beautiful Feet Mission Conference in the fall of 2014 with more than 200 students in attendance. In November 2015, CTX sent more than 50 students to Seward, Nebraska, for that year's Beautiful Feet Conference.
- In the area of athletics (NCAA Division III), the CTX men's basketball team won the American Southwest Conference (ASC) tournament in 2013; Jack Cersosimo won the men's golf ASC individual championship in 2015; Connor Bertsch (baseball) was named ASC Male Athlete of the Year in 2015; and in 2014, CTX baseball player Ryan Ullman was drafted by the Washington Nationals and made it to AA ball before being released 18 months later.
- In January 2015, the university undertook a Culture Change Initiative in which it surveyed its full-time employees (with a 94 percent response rate) and determined to move toward a strong constructive culture. Since then, multiple forums have been held and new structures have been put in place to make this happen. A follow-up survey will occur in January 2017.
- Concordia student Hannah Boeck was selected as a Fulbright Scholar in spring of 2013 and spent the year in Malaysia teaching English. Hannah is CTX's first-ever Fulbright Scholar.
- Long-time Concordia faculty members Rev. Dr. Clyde Duder and Dr. Debra Allen (both rostered workers of the LCMS) passed away during this triennium. Together, the two of them gave many years to Concordia University Texas, with Dr. Duder having also served at Concordia University Chicago.
- The Concordia University Texas choirs perform a Masterwork Series every spring, including community members and a professional orchestra. Works over the past four years include Mozart's *Requiem*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Mozart's *Mass in C Minor*, and Brahms's *Requiem*.
- The Annual Christian Leadership Gala regularly recognizes a community leader who exemplifies Christian values and provides leadership in the greater-Austin area. The 2014 gala recognized Tom and Penny Cedel for their years of service to both Concordia and the Central Texas Region. More than 500 people packed the Four Seasons Ballroom and raised over \$140,000 for scholarships at CTX.

- Concordia was the recipient of a pay-for-success grant from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation that provided two full-time success coaches for more than 200 students who exhibited at-risk factors. This grant was done in conjunction with College Forward, a local nonprofit which focuses on helping first-generation college students successfully transition from high school to college.
- Graduating students all take the College Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) exam, which shows each year that CTX students meet or exceed the national benchmark in areas of critical thinking, reading, writing, science, and mathematics.
- In partnership with Water to Thrive, a local nonprofit that builds wells in Africa, Concordia students, faculty, and staff have now raised enough funds to build 13 wells. The 10th well (built in 2014) was named in honor of Tom and Penny Cedel for their service to Concordia University Texas.
- In 2015, 100 percent of graduating nurses passed the NCLEX, putting the Concordia Nursing Program in the top 10 percent of Texas nursing schools.
- Two 2014 graduates of Concordia, Heath and Alyssa Padgett, have been featured on Fox News, Huffington Post, People Magazine, Good Morning America, and many other news outlets for their 50 states/50 jobs RV adventure and their ensuing documentary, *Hourly America*.
- After a year of study and feedback, Concordia published its Lutheran Distinctive Document in January 2013, a work that describes the Lutheran ethos of the CTX community. This document serves as an introduction to how we teach, learn, and live together as an institution of Lutheran higher education.

Donald Christian, President and CEO

Concordia University Wisconsin

Concordia University is a Lutheran higher education community committed to helping students develop in mind, body, and spirit for service to Christ in the Church and the world.

Report to the 66th Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod | July 2016

As of the fall 2015 census, Concordia University serves 9,168 students at two residential campuses in Mequon, Wis., and Ann Arbor, Mich., online, and at ten extension campuses.

The University's six schools of study offer 70 undergraduate majors and programs, 37 graduate/master's degrees and programs, four doctoral/professional programs, nine associate degrees, and 35 certificates and licenses. The largest programs area include Business, Education, Family Life, and Health Professions. The University educates a strong percentage of the church career professional undergraduates in the Concordia University System, 341 as of fall 2015.

Concordia University's strategic effort is framed by four Mission Vision Themes: Faith and Learning Centered, Purposeful Growth, Impact through Service and Leadership, Access and Opportunity.

A Faith and Learning Centered Community

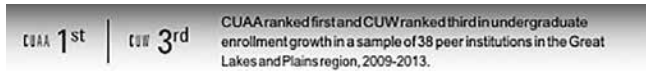
Concordia is Christ-centered, learner-focused institution driven by rigorous academics and a commitment to excellence in teaching.

Learner Profile

Enrollment (2015-2016)
38% Traditional Undergraduate
18% Accelerated Learning/
Non-Traditional

Explore the highlights of
Concordia University at
www.concordia.report.

40% Graduate School
4% Professional (Pharmacy)



41% Lutheran traditional undergraduate students 5% International
20% Minority
25% first generation, traditional undergraduates

341 | CUW • CUAA

341 Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor lead in total numbers of traditional CUW and CUAA undergraduates pursuing church careers.

CUW 96% | CUAA 82%

96% of CUW and 82% of CUAA traditional undergraduates are employed one year after graduation.

Committed to Purposeful Growth

One University, two residential campuses

Concordia University Wisconsin's merger with Concordia University Ann Arbor was finalized on July 1, 2013. Total student enrollment at CUAA is up 32%. The University will open a new School of Nursing in Ann Arbor in the fall of 2016. New academic programs in Business, Education, and Athletic Training, and campus enhancements (including the purchase in fall 2015 of the former Cooley Law School located in north Ann Arbor, athletic facilities including a new football stadium, and multimillion dollar renovations to the Science Building and the Kreft Center for the Arts) have brought new vigor to CUAA's 900 students.

Developing student vocation

Concordia students are educated to develop a lifelong vocational orientation that will focus their careers on serving the Church and the world. As part of the Concordia Career and Calling Advantage, in its pilot phase at CUAA, all students develop a Vocational Portfolio that helps to clarify their professional goals and deepens their sense of Christ-led purpose.

Champions for Access and Opportunity

The Concordia Promise

Concordia provides access to the highest-value higher education experience. Through the Concordia Promise Dual Credit Program, enrolled high school students pay a reduced tuition cost of \$50 per credit hour. Students are then eligible to participate in the Concordia Promise Plus, a scholarship in the amount paid for dual credit courses that is applied toward their undergraduate tuition at CUW or CUAA. The result? Students can achieve one full year of undergraduate education cost free.

Serving our heroes

As a result of a strategic effort to help veterans achieve their educational goals, Concordia's student veteran population has increased 82% since fall 2014. The formation of American Legion Post 1881, one of only 11 in the nation on a college campus, underscores our commitment to our nation's heroes.

Key Strategic Priorities

Among the many strategies in the current University Plan, the following strategies will receive primary focus in the next academic year:

- Enhance the Christ-centered identity of the University, as evidenced by a deeper expression of faith by individuals, within classrooms, and throughout the campus communities.
- Create a student learning-centered environment by prioritizing academic rigor university-wide, and by strengthening a comprehensive and innovative curriculum.
- Increase graduation rates by developing more effective academic and student services.
- Expand the Concordia Promise to ensure a Lutheran higher education experience becomes available for more students, not fewer.
- Increase lead generation among self-identified Lutheran students.
- Broaden the University-Wide Learning Outcome for global citizenship.
- Offer expansive service learning experiences for students in the local community and throughout the Church.
- Pursue vigorous, rapid, mission-minded, market-ready new program development.
- Manage tuition percentage increases by improving efficiencies, reducing waste, and innovating significant new funding sources.
- Engage alumni in a lifelong relationship by increasing Concordia's investment in their careers and alumni investment in Concordia's ongoing mission.

Patrick T. Ferry, President

R16

Lutheran Church Extension Fund: “Upon This Rock, Repent, Confess, Rejoice.”

Organization Mission Statement:

“To support the Church in fulfilling its mission of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ by being a Christ-centered servant partner of the LCMS, ensuring that funds and services are available now and in the future.”

The Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) is honored to serve and support LCMS-related ministries in support of the sharing of the Gospel.

During the period from July 1, 2013, through December 31, 2015, the United States economy grew moderately with the gross domestic product experiencing 2–2.5 percent growth. Employment was strengthened during this period as the unemployment rate decreased from 7.4 percent at the end of 2013 to 5.3 percent at the end of 2015. The housing and auto industries performed strongly due to pent-up demand, but recent manufacturing data is reflecting a slowdown due to the strengthening of the dollar and global growth concerns. The Federal Reserve's actions to increase US interest rates, slowing growth in China, and emerging economies and falling commodity prices have resulted in significant volatility in financial markets. Investors are concerned about the ability of the central banks to support economic growth, the potential of a global recession, and the increasing threat of global terrorism.

In spite of the challenges and concerns outlined above, the Lord continues to bless LCEF with many opportunities to serve the ministries and members of the LCMS with investments, loans, and services. LCEF is pleased to report on the key financial trends and activities of the LCEF during the period from July 1, 2013, through December 31, 2015, below. For more current information, visit lcef.org or call 800-843-5233.

Investments

- **Investor Payables**—Loyal investors continue to provide funds for loans to LCMS ministries to support their efforts to expand God's kingdom. In line with projected loan demand, LCEF managed an

intentional reduction of the dollar balance of investor notes from a total of \$1.59 billion as of June 30, 2013, to \$1.48 billion as of June 30, 2015, as over \$400 million of five-year notes matured during the period. LCEF met its goal of retaining 80 percent of these maturities. In the fall of 2015, LCEF conducted a special promotion, which raised an additional \$87 million in investor notes to support increasing loan demand experienced during the first two quarters of fiscal 2016. The balance of investor payables at December 31, 2015, was \$1.55 billion.

- **Reversing the Decline in Investor Relationships**—Throughout this period, LCEF focused on increasing investor relationships, offering products designed to attract new investors without raising significant dollars. LCEF successfully reversed the decline in the number of investors, increasing relationships from a low of 50,709 at June 30, 2013, to a high of 56,115 at December 31, 2015—an increase of 10.7 percent.

Loans

- **Loans Receivable**—LCEF supported ministry expansion during the fiscal years 2013–15, with loan approvals totaling \$470 million and loan disbursements totaling \$508 million, approximating the level of loan repayments. As indicated, loan approvals for the first two quarters of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, have increased over those of the past three years. To more effectively serve LCMS ministries, LCEF reorganized its lending department to provide greater emphasis on serving Recognized Service Organizations, the Concordia universities, and partner church bodies.
- **Pastoral Education Loan Program**—The Pastoral Education Loan Program was launched in the spring of 2013 to provide assistance to active LCMS pastors with education debt. The program offers loans for the consolidation of government-guaranteed and privately held student loans.
- **Low Interest Rates**—Market interest rates have remained low. As a result, ministries have had an opportunity to borrow at historically low levels since LCEF set rates on a combination of the cost of funds and prevailing market interest rates.
- **Shared Blessings rebate program**—During the triennium, LCEF increased the promotion of the Shared Blessings rebate program, which is based on the number of congregation members investing with LCEF. It is anticipated that the level of rebates remitted to congregations borrowing from LCEF will reach \$850,000 during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016.
- **Loan Delinquencies and Impairments**—LCEF's Loan Resolution Group continues to work diligently with ministries experiencing challenges. As a result of these efforts and God's blessings, the level of impaired loans has decreased from \$170 million on June 30, 2013, to \$149 million on June 30, 2015. The 90-day delinquency rate has reached a historic low of 1.3 percent as of December 31, 2015. LCEF remains committed to working with ministries as they seek solutions to the challenges they face.

Ministry Support

- **Ministry Support**—Ministry Support offers a variety of services for LCMS ministries such as Capital Funding, Stewardship, Architectural Advisory Services, Demographic Studies, and Laborers For Christ. During the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, the Ministry Support department reorganized to intentionally be more responsive to the needs of the LCMS, its districts, and related ministries. During the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2014, VisionPath was fully launched, offering a catalytic planning experience to help ministries arrive at clarity regarding their vision. During December 2015, Laborers For Christ entered into an agreement with Bethesda to perform deferred maintenance for Bethesda's homes throughout the United States. During the three-year period, Ministry Support served 723 ministries and conducted capital campaigns that raised \$86.1 million in support of ministry. Over the course of its 23-year history, Capital Funding Services has conducted capital campaigns with commitments of \$516.4 million.
- **Distribution of Operating Results**—LCEF made more than \$7 million of earnings available to the Synod and partner districts. In 2013,

\$1.6 million was made available, and in 2014 a double distribution of \$3.3 million was available with one half utilized to fund a newly established granting program entitled the Kaleidoscope Fund. In 2015, \$2.1 million was made available.

- **Kaleidoscope Fund**—During the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2014, LCEF established a granting program available to certain LCMS ministries based on LCEF policies with an initial allocation of \$1.7 million. Additional funding for this program will be made available in the future from earnings, distributions, and portions of unrestricted gifts to the LCEF. Guidelines for this program are being finalized, and it is expected that the initial grants will be made during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016.
- **Gift Planning**—During the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, LCEF added a vice-president of gift planning to oversee planned giving efforts, enhance relationships with existing donors and investors, and build new ones with those who have a passion for LCEF's ministry. LCEF works closely with the LCMS Foundation in fulfilling these efforts.
- **Sponsorship of Lutheran Federal Credit Union (LFCU)**—During the triennium, the LCEF Board of Directors and LCEF leadership thoroughly researched the concept of a federal credit union to serve the members and ministries of the LCMS. After prayerful deliberation and close coordination with the LCMS Board of Directors, the Board approved a sponsorship to support this start-up and allocated \$5 million in capital. The credit union received its charter during December 2014 and began its operations during the following year. Based on its Federal Charter, LFCU will be able to offer residential and debt-consolidation loans to rostered church workers in all 50 states. In the past, LCEF has offered these loans within a selected number of states. LCEF has arrangements with LFCU to purchase loans it makes to rostered church workers. LCEF remains a separate entity from the LFCU.
- **California-Nevada-Hawaii (CNH) Entry**—After prayerful deliberation and diligent research and analysis, the CNH District and its Church Extension Fund elected to become the 29th participating district of LCEF, effective January 1, 2016.
- **Student Marketing Campaign**—During the triennium, LCEF continued to offer LCMS universities the opportunity to participate in LCEF's student marketing campaign. The students, under the direction of a university faculty member, prepare a marketing campaign based on the objectives defined by LCEF. The teams present their campaigns before a panel of third-party judges at the Synod's headquarters in St. Louis. The judges evaluate each team's preparedness and performance. LCEF has benefitted and has incorporated several of the students' ideas into LCEF's marketing plan. We are pleased to share that there has been strong participation since inception.

Financial Trends

- **Total Assets**—Based on projected loan demand, LCEF intentionally managed a reduction in its investor payables, resulting in a decrease of total assets from \$1.78 billion on June 30, 2013, to \$1.7 billion on June 30, 2015. With the special promotion highlighted above, total assets as of December 31, 2015, increased to \$1.76 billion. LCEF is well positioned to support loan demand in the foreseeable future.
- **Capital to Asset/Liquidity Ratios**—LCEF continues its commitment to a strong capital and liquidity position. LCEF improved its capital position from 9.89 percent as of June 30, 2013, to 11.07 percent as of December 31, 2015, an increase of 1.18 percent. The FDIC considers 8 percent a strong capital ratio for financial institutions. LCEF's level of cash and investments as a percentage of its outstanding investor payables on December 31, 2015, totaled 20.9 percent, a level consistent with the liquidity position the prior three fiscal years. A 20 percent liquidity ratio is considered very strong within the financial industry.
- **Strong Income**—LCEF continues to achieve strong operating income, earning \$12 million during the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2013, \$9.5 million during fiscal 2014, and \$12.5 million during fiscal 2015. Net income totaled \$6 million, \$18.8 million, and \$4.1 million, respectively. The major fluctuations impacting net income were changes in the value of LCEF's investment portfolio, reflecting a loss of \$6.6

million in fiscal 2013, a gain of \$7.2 million in fiscal 2014, and a loss of \$6.6 million in fiscal 2015. In addition to the market-value adjustments, LCEF recorded the \$5 million sponsorship of the Lutheran Federal Credit Union during fiscal 2015.

- **Enterprise Risk Management (ERM)**—During the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2015, LCEF engaged KPMG to perform an Enterprise Risk Assessment to identify the top risks confronting LCEF as it seeks to fulfill its mission. KPMG concluded that LCEF's management and board have a consistent understanding of key risks facing the organization, the organization is in a good position to advance its risk management program, and its current processes are comparable to those utilized by middle-market financial institutions. The Board has assigned responsibility for monitoring ERM to the Audit Committee. Management has formulated a quarterly risk-monitoring and reporting system designed to report to the Audit Committee and the Board.

Conclusion

LCEF has been blessed with loyal support from its investors and faithful commitment from its borrowers. As a result, LCEF is positioned with a strong capital and liquidity position and has sufficient funds available to support loans to ministries within the United States and throughout the world. LCEF seeks ways to advance innovation and creativity in our approach. We are committed to explore responsible lending options that challenge historical approaches and meet today's needs of our partners within the LCMS.

We encourage all of our national and district staff members and volunteers to seek God's guidance in turning any perceived "road-blocks" into opportunities to serve and support ministries' efforts to share His Word. We seek to share the resources entrusted to us, the talents of our staff and volunteers, as we are guided by the Lord and the Holy Scriptures. We seek to be a catalyst for energizing ministry, and we thank God for the privilege of serving.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Richard C. Robertson, *President/CEO*

R17

LCMS Foundation



Since its inception in 1958, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation has served the individuals and families of the LCMS to make the very best gifts to their favorite ministries. The Foundation is privileged to report to you the number and value of all those gifts each year. These numbers reflect God's blessings and the amazing generosity that provides resources for our LCMS ministries to carry out the mission and ministry of the Lord's Church.

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 gifts include cash, stocks, real estate, personal property, and other types of assets that the Foundation is able to convert for ministry use. Individual donors direct the Foundation on the timing and use of these gifts.

Gifts supporting ministry that have been received during the past three fiscal years are the result of the Foundation's core services in gift planning and gift administration. These resources went directly to LCMS ministries. Some gifts were the result of a donor generously writing a check. Other gifts were bequests made through a donor's estate plan. The remaining majority of gifts were planned gifts administered by the Foundation and distributed to ministry after the

donor was called to their heavenly home. These planned gifts include endowments, donor-advised funds, charitable remainder trusts, gift annuities, and other complex gifts.

From July 1, 2013, through June 30, 2015, the LCMS Foundation distributed 274,642 gifts totaling \$160,193,457 to more than 900 LCMS ministries. These ministries include our congregations and schools, seminaries, districts, and ministries providing missionary support, rural and urban outreach, housing assistance, and much more.

Ministries that receive significant gifts can then benefit by working with the Foundation to establish, promote, and responsibly manage those gifts. The Foundation serves as custodian for hundreds of LCMS organizations to help turn giving into long-term ministry funding. We provide sophisticated, diversified investment portfolios at low cost to match the resource objectives of the organization.

LEADERSHIP and ORGANIZATION

Mr. David Fiedler has served as President of the LCMS Foundation since 2013. His cabinet team consists of four senior vice presidents providing leadership to the organizational operations of the Foundation. Fifty employees serve the Foundation.

Gift Planning: This team of gift planning counselors meets with individuals and families to establish their Lifetime Plan for Giving. It is a comprehensive process that executes their stewardship goals for family and ministry during life and through estate plans.

Investment services: By managing assets collectively for the church, the Foundation is able to grant LCMS congregations and ministry organizations access to a sophisticated, diversified investment model at a low cost. The Foundation embraces its role of serving the church to make it stronger today, tomorrow, and forever.

Gift administration: This team consists of our staff attorneys and trust administrators who provide the management services to support and oversee endowments, gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, and other complex giving vehicles established by LCMS donors and ministry organizations.

Marketing: This team creates opportunities to learn about and respond to gift planning and investment service opportunities. They also partner with congregations and other ministries to produce custom resources to promote gift planning and endowment fund development.

GOVERNANCE

While the Foundation exists to serve all congregations and entities of the church, 60 voting Members elect trustees and vote on other official actions, typically once a year at the Foundation's annual meeting. Foundation Member organizations currently include 35 LCMS districts, 10 colleges/universities, two seminaries, nine other Synod-affiliated entities, and five delegates appointed by the LCMS Board of Directors to represent the Synod.

Direct oversight to the Foundation is provided by its Board of Trustees, which meets quarterly to review and monitor the performance and activity of the organization and to provide strategic direction. The Foundation board is made up of eleven trustees, of whom seven are elected by the LCMS Member organizations described above. 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.

STRATEGIC PLAN and TRANSFER THE BLESSING PROGRAM

As the Foundation looks to the future, we seek to grow our impact on the Lutheran Church and its ability to share the Gospel. We are continually reviewing the needs of the Church and our Lutheran donors to determine how we can better serve the people and organizations of the

LCMS. We have gathered 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. The result of this effort has been to identify six key areas we will focus on over the next several years:

- Offer best-in-class service, staff talent, and infrastructure.
- Develop and maintain mutually beneficial partnerships within the church.
- Increase retention and realization of future planned gifts.
- Increase awareness of and preference for the Foundation's abilities to support ministries.
- Increase the usage and effectiveness of data and analytics in operations and decision-making.
- Explore the potential for supporting church worker debt relief.

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 ministry pairs a Foundation gift planning counselor with a congregation's stewardship or endowment committee to identify, qualify, and work directly with congregation members in establishing their charitable Christian estate plans. Transfer the Blessings builds upon the relationship the member has with the congregation and produces an approach to giving that provides resources to the church beyond weekly offerings.

The Foundation's annual Ministry Report with supplemental information, updated financials, and distributions appears on the Foundation's website at www.lcmsfoundation.org. The Foundation's audited financial statements are also located on the website. Please contact us anytime at 800-325-7912.

As it enters the next triennium, the Foundation rejoices in the enormous blessings of the past and looks forward confidently by God's grace to the future.

David Fiedler, *President*

R18

LCMS National Housing Support Corporation

As a wholly owned subsidiary corporation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, LCMS National Housing Support Corporation (NHSC) is a faith-based not-for-profit organization that incorporated in the state of Missouri in 2004 and launched its first year of operations in 2007. NHSC functions under the registered trademark of Lutheran Housing Support. The primary function of NHSC is to seek, secure, and leverage funding from public, private, and corporate sources. These sources are used to assist LCMS congregations, districts, and social ministries to develop capacity and engage in community development initiatives. NHSC continues the Synod's rich legacy of serving our neighbors' bodily needs through housing and community development services.

NHSC's *vision* is for restored and revitalized neighborhoods that are anchored by LCMS congregations actively engage in collaborative mercy.

To bring that vision into reality, our *mission* is to provide access to capital and customized consulting services for underserved neighborhoods in order to transform them into thriving communities.

NHSC's Value Statements are as follows:

- **Christ-centered:** our work is grace-filled and a grateful response to the love of God in Christ Jesus.
- **Commitment:** we are committed to the personal, spiritual, and professional growth of our employees and to the well-being of the congregations and neighborhoods we serve.
- **Collaborative:** we seek to work with other like-minded individuals, congregations, and organizations to accomplish our mission.

- **Mercy:** the mercy that we show others is a reflection of God's mercy to us.

Since its inception, NHSC has grown to provide a variety of services to LCMS entities and their partners. NHSC's current services include

- networking with, training, and supporting communities, LCMS entities, and their partners engaged in community-based projects to successfully seek and secure private and public financial investments for redevelopment and revitalization activities;
- developing models for successful neighborhood revitalization in blighted and economically challenged communities;
- providing financial and technical support designed to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of organizations engaged in housing and neighborhood revitalization activities in economically challenged communities; and
- establishing locally-based, sustainable and financially stable collaboration vehicles that support and promote promising, innovative approaches to revitalize communities and help prevent future deterioration.

NHSC's notable achievements over the last three years include the following:

- Received more than \$2.2 million in support to fund housing ministry and community development projects across the United States
- Allocated 25 grants, totaling \$108,000, to LCMS entities to spur community development activities
- Provided a wide variety of resources and consulting services to 80 unique LCMS entities located in 19 states and Chile
- Provided training to over 185 pastors, lay people, and LCMS partners, focused on various community development related topics
- Created a fund-raising platform and guide that can be utilized as a resource for LCMS entities
- Expanded NHSC's Board of Directors, broadening its depth, diversity, and skill sets
- Retooled NHSC's brand and launched a new website: <http://www.nationalhousingsupport.org/>
- Successfully developed and launched a lending business line
- Launched NHSC's first national pilot program in 2013, "Helping Hand"; the Helping Hand program, in partnership with LCEF's Laborers for Christ and Emmanuel Lutheran and Redeemer Lutheran in Fort Wayne, Indiana, provided health- and safety-related repairs. Eight low-income owners received assistance, and one vacant and abandoned unit adjacent to Emmanuel was rehabilitated. This project provided a new home for a young family with modest means who worships at Emmanuel.
- Received a grant award of \$100,000 at the national LWML Convention to implement another Helping Hand initiative in 2016 in partnership with two additional LCMS congregations
- Worked to develop or expand partnerships for the purposes of advancing the kingdom among LCMS departments and entities, such as LCMS Urban and private and public financial investments for redevelopment and revitalization activities
- Developed relationships with major national training, financial, and service partners (e.g., NeighborWorks America; Lutheran Immigrant Refugee Services; PNC; City of Fort Wayne, Indiana; City of St. Louis, Missouri; US Department of Treasury; and Wells Fargo).
- Completed owner-occupied rehabilitation in over 30 units in College Hill, enabling elderly residents to age in place
- Attracted more than \$1.3 million in direct and indirect investment in the Cottage Hill neighborhood and tens of thousands of volunteer hours
- Constructed three new homes in Cottage Hill; sold two and one continues to serve as a model home. Two more units are slated for construction.

Over the past three years, NHSC has achieved some tremendous milestones! While NHSC is pressing forward, it is experiencing some growing pains, which have placed some strain on the corporation's financial and human resources. NHSC's team continues to stay

focused, explore ways to operate more efficiently, identify additional financial resources, and strive to be financially prudent. NHSC is preparing to start another strategic planning endeavor. It envisions that the goals to be considered will include, but are not limited to

- building a diverse revenue support structure;
- strengthening NHSC's image and brand to enable it to expand into new geographic areas, increase borrowers, and generate funding support;
- building development service capacity to respond to the demands of current customers and meet the needs of targeted markets; and
- transitioning from a direct service provider in College Hill, North St. Louis, to providing technical assistance to a more locally based organization.

NHSC's task, in partnership with LCMS congregations, districts, and RSOs, is urgent and complex, and we ask for your continued prayers and support.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Turner-Ridley, *Chief Executive*

R19

Atlantic District

The Atlantic District is composed of the eastern portion of New York State, including Long Island, New York City (the capital of the world), the northern suburbs of New York City, the Hudson Valley, the state capital region around Albany and Schenectady, and points north to the Canadian border. It is one of the most beautiful geographical regions of the United States and one of the most densely populated. Roughly 6 percent of the national population resides within the borders of the Atlantic District, many of whom are unchurched or dechurched. Both the Capital Region and New York City were listed in the top 10 post-Christian, least-churched places in the United States. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few (Luke 10:2).

Mission outreach continues to be the main focus of the Atlantic District as we go about "Engaging the World with the Gospel of Hope," the Atlantic District theme. This is more than mere words as we share the Gospel in multiple languages, with different cultural groups, and across the global neighborhood on our doorstep. The Gospel is shared in 20 different languages in the Divine Service among a sea of different-looking people with very similar hearts. Many congregations have multiple services in multiple languages on a given Sunday.

There are a number of men in various routes leading toward ordination, including EIIT, SMP, and traditional routes. The training of lay leaders to assist the congregation under the supervision of the local pastor continues to be strongly encouraged. These leaders are able to assist their local congregations in a variety of tasks to serve the church. They are truly a blessing.

There have been a number of mission initiatives over the last three years. The Ebola project in Liberia that provided food to local churches in the midst of a crisis is just one example of "Engaging the World with the Gospel of Hope." This project was born out of personal relationships of an Atlantic District pastor with Liberian churches in partnership with the LCMS. Through the project, hundreds of pounds of food were served to starving people. It was a blessing!

The triennium of 2013–15 was also a time of transition. The Rev. David H. Benke retired as district president and continued in parish life. A new district president, the Rev. Derek G. Lecakes, was elected and installed.

Summarized below are the results of our viability study for the Atlantic District, according to the eight general principles detailed in 2013 Res. 7-04A.

It is generally accepted that there are always additional resources that could be utilized in carrying out ecclesiastical supervision.

However, there are sufficient resources for the district president to carry out ecclesiastical supervision in a reasonable and timely manner.

The emphasis of regular visitation of all district churches and rostered church workers is ongoing. This is not only listed in the Synod Bylaws but was strongly encouraged by the Atlantic District convention.

Congregations are regularly encouraged to "Engage the World with the Gospel of Hope." This is to be done in word and deed as we live out our calling as the church. This is to be done within our congregations and outside in our communities.

Encouragement and congregational services are provided to congregations through district staff and elected servants. These cover a variety of areas and respond to requested needs of congregations.

The Atlantic District does its best to adapt to the new, changing world. As people and culture have changed, the district strives to continue to meet the challenges of this new world without watering down or compromising the Gospel.

The Atlantic District continues to seek out new opportunities to support and grow the mission and ministry of the church in the district. This is a challenging task in an environment where normal giving patterns seem to be changing. The challenge for the Atlantic District is not only supporting ongoing ministry but also assisting struggling congregations, starting new missions, and identifying and training diverse leaders of the church.

There seems to be a variety of views regarding the size of the Atlantic District. Some think we are too large to meet the needs of each congregation, some believe we are too small to be able to meet the needs of each congregation, and many see the Atlantic District to be just the right size. Of course, there is always a small group that does not seem to care.

It is generally perceived that the Atlantic District president can and does carry out the functions and obligations of the office. There is always a desire for additional assistance and support, but he serves willingly and faithfully.

The conclusion regarding the viability of the Atlantic District is that while the challenges of sharing the Gospel in an increasingly non-Christian environment continue to grow, the dedicated pastors, commissioned workers, lay deacons, laity, and staff empowered by the Gospel seek to "Engage the World with the Gospel of Hope." The reality is that the world lives right on our doorstep.

Derek G. Lecakes, *President*

R20

California-Nevada-Hawaii District

For well over a decade, the vision guiding our district is challenging and assisting our churches to serve as missionary outposts in their communities. Realizing this vision required that we understand and embrace our missionary status—that God has called us to proclaim the Gospel at a time and place where the Christian church is profoundly marginalized. We are "*elect* exiles of the dispersion," as St. Peter reminded his first-century readers. As such we celebrate the fact that our "outsider" or "alien" status is not by human accident but by divine design. This missional paradigm has taken root in the CNH District, including our board of directors, circuits, and the majority of our congregations and schools. God has planted us in the soil of a great US mission field with an identity and purpose rooted not primarily in the preservation of our past, but in the faithful proclamation of His Son, especially among those who do not yet know Him.

Strategic Mission Field Initiatives

As our West Coast world grows increasingly hostile to Christian churches, we rejoice that our Lord is raising up a new generation of

Christian disciples in the CNH District, eager to plant the Gospel among those outside His church. Thus we've focused on four strategic mission initiatives in the last triennium.

The first emphasis was the development of a Missions Agency that ensures a deliberate focus directed toward inspiring, networking, equipping, and releasing the baptized in the mission of Christ. The Missions Agency enables us to (1) promote mission awareness, vision, education, and advancement through personal congregational visits; (2) host annual mission conferences (the second conference held in the midst of our 70th district convention); (3) publish *Missional Leadership* (an e-magazine), "In Mission" (a regular mission newsletter), and a twice-monthly prayer newsletter; (4) support missionaries involved in multiple church plants; (5) provide congregation mission mini-grants to assist congregations in reaching their community with creative evangelistic plans; (6) sponsor Hands-On Mission Events around the district; and (7) develop a mission prayer network.

The second emphasis is forming strategic alliances with our brothers and sisters in the Pacific Southwest and Northwest Districts along with mission-minded agencies within the Synod to focus on (1) missionary training of our professional church workers (especially our new graduates); (2) the equipping of the baptized as "laborers for the harvest"; and (3) the revitalization of congregations and schools to engage in speaking and living the Gospel in their local and global communities. In concert with Synod's national revitalization program, Transforming Churches Network (TCN), we have invested district resources for the last nine years on congregational revitalization with a goal of developing locally based mission outreach. The CNH District's version, "Transforming for Mission," combines team consultations, continuing education, and coaching for congregations, pastors, and leaders to become more mission-minded and work to establish additional mission outposts. Key elements of revitalization include a refocused vision, streamlined governance, outreach strategies, engaged laity, leadership development, and coaching. Congregations find this process helpful during times of transition and/or times of ministry plateaus. The net result is that a great number of CNH District congregations have come to understand and embrace the missional reality of their communities.

Building on our revitalization efforts, we've recently partnered with Pastoral Leadership Institute (PLI) and LINC Houston to focus on multiplying missional disciples, and the Center for U.S. Missions for church planting. "Dwelling 114" leads learning communities in three different regions around the CNH District, aimed at equipping our people to join Jesus in His mission every day. The CNH District deeply appreciates the ministry of the Missionary Training Center at Concordia University, Portland, for training mission-minded lay deacons and the ministry of both seminaries—Concordia Seminary and Concordia Theological Seminary—in preparing faithful pastors and deaconesses and in developing innovative approaches such as the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program to assist us in caring for the found and reaching out to the lost.

Our third emphasis is deploying lay leadership, commissioned workers, and pastors to plant new faith communities that multiply disciples. While we see an overall decline in congregational membership among Anglo populations, missionary work across cultural and linguistic lines continues to grow. We have been blessed to experience the planting of the following churches and satellite churches this triennium: (1) Addis Kidan (New Covenant), an East African congregation serving in two locations in San Francisco; (2) Faith Lutheran, a Chinese congregation in South San Francisco; (3) St. John's Valley of Faith, first and second generation Latino, in Arvin, California, a satellite of St. John's in Bakersfield. In addition, seven new mission ministries and faith communities have been launched: (1) He-Nani-Pu Aloha in Waianae, Hawaii (Hawaiian indigenous work in partnership

with Lutheran Indian Ministries); (2) 1.5 Generation Millennial Mosaic Church Plant at Good Shepherd, Hayward, California; (3) an Oromo language group, also at Good Shepherd; (4) Joy of Harvest Hmong mission work at Greenhaven Lutheran in Sacramento; (5) Ethiopian ministry at Our Faith Davis also sponsored by Town and Country, Sacramento; (6) LINC Bay Area in partnership with LINC Houston and the support of Prince of Peace, Fremont, California; and (7) St. Matthew Lutheran mission on the island of Kauai. Again we give thanks for the combined theological education contributions of our district pastors along with the cooperation of the larger Synod through the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) and the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Seminary, the Cross-cultural Ministry Center at Concordia University, Irvine, and our pastoral colloquy process.

The fourth emphasis (which undergirds the other three) is encouraging and providing resources to the baptized of the CNH District to devote themselves to daily intercessory prayer (corporate and personal) for the nations, the church, and the coming of Christ's kingdom in the lives of all people.

Supporting Our Smaller Churches

The CNH District is primarily made up of smaller congregations. Based on the 2011 Synodical Statistical report, 41 percent have 100 communicants or less; 39 percent have 75 communicants or less; and 25 percent have 50 communicants or less. The CNH District in its convention directed the District President to "provide staff and material resources in support of rural ministry," (resolution 3-05, 2012 District Convention). Responding to this action, the CNH Board of Directors developed the outcome, "The CNH District will provide support and resources to rural/urban small ministries to help build ministry capacity for Christ's mission."

The questions being asked by our rural and urban small churches are these: "How does a congregation of 35, 50, or even 100 in membership find a way to continue vital ministry of Word and Sacrament?" "What skills do small church leaders—both laity and pastoral—need to remain effective in their community?" "How can small membership congregations rediscover a sense of their own mission so they can remain passionate about being what Christ calls them to be?" And for some, they have begun to think about what their legacy for the future Gospel ministry in the CNH District might be.

Common to almost all of these congregations are the following: all have a love for their Lord; all are engaged in some way in service to their community (although many don't see these activities as direct ministry); most all have some concern regarding finances and many rely on endowment funds or other third-source income to manage their budgets; many have concerns over deferred maintenance with their property; and many are unable now or in the future to support a full-time pastor. Too often the temptation for smaller congregations is to grieve the loss of their past or hope to regain what once was. The congregations found to be most healthy in their ministry are those who do not hope to regain or retain the past, but have looked at the current needs of their communities and have launched ministries to address those needs, using the gifts and talents of their current membership. They have adapted their ministry and resources to reach out to their community.

The greatest challenge in providing resources to our smaller congregations in the future is providing or training local leadership for ministry, including Word and Sacrament. We need to continue to be open to different options, including dual parish calls, worker priests, the use of licensed lay deacons, and retired pastors. For some, it may be time to consider concluding ministry and plan a God-pleasing legacy to provide Gospel proclamation through new church plants.

Lutheran Education

Education remains a critical ministry link between our churches and the larger society; thus, our Lutheran schools, preschools, and early childhood centers continue to serve as vital mission and ministry centers in our communities. Presently we have 65 schools in our district with over 6,850 children attending. Over 25 percent of these children are unchurched. In the last three years, we have had reported 252 Baptisms of children and 74 adult Baptisms or confirmations that have resulted directly through their ministries.

Our Lutheran schools reflect the changing cultural and ethnic landscape of our CNH District. Where once our schools were intended primarily for the children of our Saxon immigrants, today less than 60 percent of the children would claim Anglo-Saxon heritage. The other 40 percent come from Asian, Latino, African American, Pacific Islander, and African immigrant populations.

Like the Jewish exiles in Babylon, CNH District congregations have entered a period in our history where we Christians do not direct the affairs of our world in any significant way. We take heart in the fact that Jesus owns this part of history too. His promises cannot be shaken; His strong arm cannot be shortened as He moves triumphantly to the completion of His Father's will—"that all might be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." This post-Christian era provides us with new and great opportunities to be His faith-filled people. We have the opportunity, even the necessity, to grow in faith and rely less on human sight, to choose the adventure of following our risen Lord into the world, rather than clinging to the fleeting safety of our own human plans and structures. Regardless of how shaken the foundations seem to be in our post-Christian world, we are anchored by Word and Sacrament to the unshakable cross of Christ.

Robert D. Newton, *President*

R21

Central Illinois District

The Lord has seen fit to grant grace upon grace, heaped up and overflowing, to an unworthy people, on account of whose sins nothing good should be conferred or be enjoyed. We repent of our sins. Nevertheless, the Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ has had free course and is being preached and taught to the benefit of parishes, people, professional church workers, parochial schools, their staff, parish teachers, and pastors. Souls are being saved alive, according to the promise of the Lord. The Holy Spirit attends the Word of God to make it the power of salvation to those who believe. We confess the faith. The sacraments are making and sustaining a peculiar people ... a royal priesthood ... a holy nation ... that declares the wonderful deeds of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. The work of the Lord continues among us and we are humbled and overwhelmed to receive and enjoy its results by which, not we, but He is glorified. We rejoice in the goodness of the Lord. On this Rock we stand!

In July 2015, 232 delegates (120 lay, 112 pastors) gathered in Springfield for the 58th Triennial Convention of the Central Illinois District. Reports were received. Resolutions were passed. Officers and Board/Commission members were elected. The Rev. Dr. Ken Schurb was the essayist on the theme of the convention: "Grace, Free and Boundless." The Rev. Dr. Herbert Mueller and Rev. Dr. Daniel Preus served as spokesmen for the Synod and more than ably presented our joint work together and also answered questions from the assembly. The Rev. David Bueltmann, the previous district president (1995–2012) received a Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* from Concordia University, Nebraska. In, through, and by the power of God's Word we now move forward with renewed zeal to share the forgiveness of sins with any in need of this comfort and to point unflinchingly

to the suffering and resurrected Jesus as this world's only hope. The peace and brotherhood of the body was duly noted and commended.

We are deeply appreciative of the sacrifice in service made to our congregations by the staff of this district: Rev. Joel Cluver (Missions, Stewardship, and Evangelism) and Mr. Glenn Goeres (Education and Congregational Life; retiring this year), Hugh Shown (bookkeeper and co-business manager) and Marsha Shown (administrative assistant), and also Mr. David Rohe, executive director of the CID Church Extension Fund, and his administrative assistant, Mrs. Susan Short, who work in concert with the district in many valuable ways.

In responding to the request that each district review its viability as a continuing agency of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, we participated during the latter months of 2015 in a survey which included officers, members of the board of directors, circuit visitors, pastors, and congregations of the district. The results were discussed and compiled by the praesidium of the district. The congregations of the district may not be aware of everything that is going on but they certainly are aware of whom to contact to get that information. Mostly this contact occurs when there is a specific need that must be addressed. Most pastors and congregations are content with the role of the district in their lives, but some see this very traditional district as being out of step with the changing times. They think that it may be time to reconsider the structure of the district in order for it to become more efficient and effective for ministry to its congregations. Finances are an issue and challenge. One suggestion (considered in times past) was that CID and SID consider forming one district to combine resources. Most respondents were convinced that this district is viable for the foreseeable future.

There are most definitely challenges that we, as well as several other districts and our church body at large, must face and consider. First, the welfare of our professional church workers, who have become fatigued and crestfallen, needs to be considered. Issues include the pressures and priorities of the office in light of their several vocations (e.g., as regards family, church worker, citizen, Christian), the sacrifices they must, or are forced, to make in their service, the unwarranted criticisms of their faithfulness in light of the world's changing mores and attitudes, flagging performance due to a lack of positive stimulus, just to name a few. Also, congregations are held in the balance by a few who lord it over the body, fail to perform due to laziness and a lack of zeal, who are coasting toward retirement and feel they have nothing left to give; but they also face a graying of the parishioner, fixed incomes, fewer people active in worship or church life in general, a lack of participation of younger generations, conflicting priorities pertaining to church, household, and extracurricular activities, just to name a few of those challenges.

We are perhaps 60 percent or so rural, and those communities are stagnant or shrinking. We have a large number of congregations which have 100 or less attending worship on any given Sunday. So part of the challenge will be looking at different alternatives that will still preserve and grow congregations in the communities in which they are presently planted. On the pastoral side, there may be a greater call to bi-vocational situations. This does not allow for the same sort and amount of care that we are used to. It adds another element of pressure to meet the needs of family: church family and one's own. On the congregational side, there is the option to form dual parishes in order to free up and unite resources, personnel, and leadership; but there again, that puts time limits and demands on pastoral care which some may not be accustomed to and might judge as failure.

These are challenges, but they are also nothing new as the church on earth has waxed and waned in popularity and numbers due to societal changes, pressures, and hostilities. The church takes comfort in the fact that it cannot be squelched for even the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. In the meantime, and we are united in our concern

and commitment to this, the Gospel must be proclaimed until the end of time, and the Lord will add daily to the church the numbers of those who are being saved. We delight in the inroads the Gospel is having among us in the Hispanic communities of Silvis and Beardstown. The church is more than statistics and programs; there are the names, faces, and lives of both those who distribute God's gifts and those who receive and benefit from them.

We do not lose heart but our zeal is renewed in and by God's grace, His undeserved love in Christ, as we are refreshed by His love, at His throne. What is steadily held before us is a blood-stained cross whereon the Prince of Glory died and an empty tomb from which rises our Savior and the victory that He shares with us. His mission is ours! We are more than conquerors! We were bought with a price! We are His!

We pray for His continued blessing on our 151 congregations, 219 Pastors, 30 Preschools, 22 Elementary Schools, 3 High Schools, 213 Commissioned Ministers, and 60,000 members that we might together make the bold confession that "Jesus Christ is Lord!" On this Rock, He builds His Church!

Mark A. Miller, *President*

R22

Eastern District

In 1854, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States) divided into four districts. The Eastern District was one of those districts, and today it is the only district that has retained its original name over 162 years of existence. In 2015, its 98th convention convened under the theme "Proclaim Jesus from the Rooftops" (Matt. 10:27).

The Eastern District is blessed to have 132 congregations, 11 Christian Day Schools, and 47 preschools in ministry throughout upstate New York, Pennsylvania, and Garrett County, Maryland, encompassing the major metropolitan areas of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Rochester, Buffalo, and Syracuse. Together, through networking and modeling best practices, your brothers and sisters of the Eastern District "*desire healthy leaders vigorously equipping God's people for Kingdom growth.*"

Aspiring to be a light for the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a darkening world, the Eastern District has encouraged the emergence of five regional mission organizations, initiated and adopted the foreign mission project "Mission Liberia," hosted mission summits, offered "Young Influential" conferences, provided tuition debt assistance to beginning church workers, and has seen the blessing of several mission starts thanks to the work of leaders and congregations eager to share the love of Jesus with their world in Rochester, New York; Hamburg, New York; Natrona, Pennsylvania; Huntington, Pennsylvania; Clarksburg, West Virginia; Scranton, Pennsylvania; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

We recognize that we are living in ever-challenging times for the church and might not always enjoy the privileges of the church past. We are grateful for strong lay leaders in our congregations. We vigorously maintain that the pastoral office was given "to equip the saints for works of ministry" (Eph. 4:11, 12). And we encourage lay leadership and thank God for the blessings of diaconal ministry in our congregations these past 25 years. Without our deacons, some of our congregations would simply cease to exist.

In keeping with Res. 7-04A, a district viability survey was conducted in September 2015. Using an online survey tool, the eight viability indicators designated in the resolution were offered for rating and comment. Overall, participants viewed the Eastern District's ministry and financial state quite positively. We received many

encouraging comments of support. Still, several observations can be made:

First, as transparent as we think we are with the information we circulate, some remain in the dark about what's going on in our district and the Synod. Few know or understand the specific responsibilities and activities of the staff. This is also true of district fiscal matters.

Second, some confusion and in some instances tension exists in the area of district-congregational expectations. There is a lack of uniformity when it comes to identifying who (district, congregation, church worker) is responsible for certain tasks.

Third, there is an overwhelming amount of support for the staff and the board of directors.

Fourth, some seem to understand the dilemma the district experiences as a middle judicatory (the middleman crunch) and even expressed some sympathy for the district.

Fifth, there is chronic anxiety and frustration over the state of the church in our world and in the Western culture today. People see ministries failing with no place to turn for help.

And the sixth takeaway is the understanding that we can always do better. The district is a human institution made up of flawed humans, for whom there is always room for improvement.

Currently the Eastern District does share education tasks with the Ohio and New Jersey Districts. The LCEF vice-president and Lutheran Foundation counselor, both of whom find their offices in the Eastern District, are shared with the New Jersey and Southeastern Districts respectively. And finally, it is the intention of the Eastern District Board of Directors to discuss the implications of this survey and make modifications as necessary to the overall district program. To this end, a Futures Task Force for 2016 has been created to propose recommendations to the board and districts as deemed significant.

Chris Wicher, *President*

R23

English District

The English District is 105 years old and is one of two nongeographic districts of the LCMS. As of this report, the English District is blessed with 163 congregations in 20 states within the US and in Ontario, Canada. The members of the English District are blessed to carry on the tradition and culture passed on from our Church Fathers past and present. As a true microcosm of the Synod, we reflect virtually every face and ministry type offered within the greater Synod. The joy of being a missional district is felt in nearly every congregation that is visited and the ministries that they offer. Some of the highlights of the last three years are as follows:

- Establishment and welcoming of two new congregations: Tree of Life, Inverness, Florida, and Apostolic Lutheran Church, Moses Lake, Washington
- New ministry focuses within existing congregations
- Addition of 3 campus ministry sites at district congregations
- Expansion of ministries in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

Due to term limits and election results, leadership within the district changed greatly. Rev. David Stechholz finished a third and final term as district president, replaced by Rev. Dr. Jamison Hardy. All four vice-presidents were elected to their first full terms in office. These new leaders are ready to carry out their tasks during this triennium.

The triennial theme for the English District is "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself." Following this divinely given theme, many congregations within the district have run with it within their own specific ministry context. Under that theme, the district is focusing on five specific areas to emphasize within the triennium:

- Loving the neighbor ... in your congregation.

- Loving the neighbor ... in your school.
- Loving the neighbor ... among your friends.
- Loving the neighbor ... at your work.
- Loving the neighbor ... amid strangers.

The goal of this activity is to build stronger connections between members of congregations and people who may not know Christ. While this is an ongoing work for all Christians, the English District is making it a priority for the next three years.

Visitation is a key component to the English District's life together. As a district that spans the nation and across national boundaries, geography is the biggest obstacle that stands between many of our congregations. To address this, the district has emphasized visitation by way of the circuit visitor, vice-presidents, and district staff. To that end, a new assistant to bishop/president and missions executive has been called to assist with this large undertaking. While the primary focus of the mission executive is working with new congregational starts, he will also help the bishop/president fulfill his task in visitation and care for the workers of the district.

As mandated by 2013 Synod Resolution 7-04A, the English District conducted the required assessment of district viability. The summary of the English District study is as follows:

- The English District provides the necessary resources to fulfill the required ecclesiastical supervisory functions. This is done in part by having the district president being deployed among congregations and church workers to provide ecclesiastical supervision and worker care. Resources are provided for travel.
- The size and scope of the English District makes visitation difficult. However, through careful planning and utilization of the regional vice-presidents and circuit visitors, the district president is able to carry out official visitation. Congregations have noted their ability to have the district president in their locations, when requested.
- The English District has a reliable staff that is responsive and very dedicated to serving within our context.
- The mission spirit of the English District is alive and well. This spirit pushes the congregations of the English District to seek the lost with the saving message of Christ Jesus our Lord.
- The English District is arguably the most ethnically diverse district in the Synod. Service to its constituent members has required keeping up with the ever-changing ethnic demographic in the United States and Canada. The interaction of church workers from across North America has helped to inform others of ongoing cultural shifts and changes.
- The English District is financially viable and makes every decision based on a desire of being good stewards of God's gifts.

The full details of the survey are available upon request. The summary is clear: the English District is viable, ready, and able to meet the challenges of the ministry into the future.

Jamison J. Hardy, *President*

R24

Florida-Georgia District

The Rev. Gregory S. Walton was elected by acclamation to a third term as president of the Florida-Georgia District, LCMS, at the district's 32nd Regular Convention, June 12–14, 2015 in Orlando, Florida. The theme of the convention was “Engaged in the Master's Business,” based on Luke 19:13: “Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come’” (ESV).

The focus of “Engaged in the Master's Business” will serve as the focus for the district in this triennium. We have a privilege, and the need is great for Christians to move into the communities in which God has set us to connect people to Jesus. The opportunities are all around us as we live out our faith in the One who has claimed us in the waters of Baptism. The Florida-Georgia District is built upon the

Rock of Jesus Christ, where we live in repentance as we boldly confess our faith and rejoice in Jesus! In Him, we are free to serve by reaching out with the love and grace of Jesus to those who have not yet heard or experienced it.

During this past triennium, the board and staff began to develop specialized ministry opportunities to highlight and support our three critical targets of Leadership, Congregations, and Outreach. In each of President Walton's terms, he has focused the district on these emphases as the Florida-Georgia District carries out its witness, mercy, and life together in Jesus.

Our vision statement says, “The people of the Florida-Georgia District are equipped, empowered, engaged ... connecting people to Jesus!” This fits in nicely with our district emphasis of engaging in the Master's business. We want to equip people for service to the church and the world. As St. Paul says in Ephesians 4, “To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (v. 12, ESV). Our desire is to encourage and raise up leaders across the district for the sake of the Gospel. Over the past three years, we have worked hard to carry out our vision.

Through the critical target of leadership, we are now providing leadership training and coaching for workers and are developing a strategy for how we can best serve and train our laity. Working with Cornerstone, we have developed Emergent Leaders, a program designed to teach the foundational principles of leadership. We designed it to reach not only pastors and other professional church workers, but also laity. In addition, we have entered into an arrangement with Pastoral Leadership Institute to facilitate missional leadership training in our district for selected pastoral couples. Our goal is to build and strengthen leaders for ministries both today and in the future.

In the critical target of congregations, we have continued a partnership agreement with Transforming Churches Network (TCN) and have broadened this by focusing on congregational revitalization. While not every congregation desires or is able to utilize the process that TCN offers, we have found that the majority of congregations are in need of some degree of revitalization—as we are daily in renewal of our Baptism, so our ministries should never lose sight of growing to connect people to Jesus. The district continues to work with several consultants not only to assess congregational ministries, but also to offer coaching to pastors to enhance their ability to lead their congregations through change. The district's revitalization ministry will continue as long as necessary.

We believe that people are empowered in their faith through the Word and Sacraments. These are tools that God uses to send us out into the world to impact people with the love and grace of Jesus. The Holy Spirit empowers us to proclaim the truths of our faith as He gifts us with everything necessary to reach out to people with the Good News of eternal life in Jesus.

Within the critical target of outreach, we began working with Lutheran Hour Ministries several years ago to develop a pilot project which was titled “The Outreach Initiative” (OI). Several goals have been set, not the least of which is to create a “culture of outreach” in the Florida-Georgia District. We have begun to see this emerge as we have worked with congregations and individuals to help them realize the opportunities that exist right in their own community. Another goal is to help congregations recognize the need to take ministry beyond the borders of their congregation into the communities where God has placed them.

As we focus on being engaged in the Master's business, we find congregations catching a vision for how they can better connect with their community and really do the work of ministry. If we want to have a lasting impact for Jesus, we must engage our communities. We are learning what an impact we can have when we take our faith

outside the confines of a ministry campus. An example of this was our “flood bucket project” for disaster care. We invited and challenged congregations to prepare flood buckets for use if a hurricane impacted our district. Over 700 buckets were prepared, and many were used in the Southeastern District during their recent flooding event. Congregations working together are able to accomplish great things for the sake of the Gospel.

The restructuring of our district into five regions has been a tremendous help in fostering partnership and accountability. We are working toward representation of individuals from every region on almost every committee and board. At the same time, we are inviting younger leaders, especially among the laity, to step up and become ministry partners with us.

We moved to a new office complex, which has been a great blessing in multiple ways. In addition to the freedom from building maintenance, we have the opportunity to witness our faith in Jesus every day with other building residents. Each morning, in our staff devotions, in addition to workers, LCEF advocates, other districts, and an RSO, we pray for the businesses in our building and sign and send a postcard to let them know we prayed for them. This has been well received.

Fiscally, like most districts, we find congregations struggling to support the partnership we share. We have endeavored to provide additional encouragement to these congregations as we develop strategies to help congregations see the value of our partnership. We are working to address the question, “What does the district do?”

We continue to cautiously and strategically study where we are able to plant new missions, and we find limitless possibilities. We are carefully using the resources available to reach further, ensuring that we have the right person, the right place, the right time, and the right plan.

The Florida-Georgia District is blessed to have a variety of wonderful school ministries and very talented workers, both rostered and non-rostered. We continue to work with school ministries to develop networks that will provide training, encouragement, sharing of resources, and critical information for ongoing growth and development.

During this triennium, the Florida-Georgia District, through the president’s office, conducted a viability study in accordance with 2013 LCMS Res. 7-04A. In total, we had 134 respondents, which included board of directors members, ordained workers, commissioned workers, circuit visitors, and the largest group, the laity. The report identified some issues which the district will continue to work to address. While there was a variety of answers for most questions, including “no opinion,” it is clear through this survey, and hopefully through this report, that the Florida-Georgia District is a viable ministry and district of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. While some felt that the district is too large, others felt it is too small. The majority felt that the size was appropriate, as well as the ministries we offer and carry out together for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In terms of funding, who wouldn’t like to have additional funds to allocate? However, we are currently debt free as a district and fully funded. We continue to grow our tithe to the Synod, which increased to 20 percent this fiscal year.

There is a tremendous degree of unity in the district as we focus on connecting people to Jesus. While we face what are becoming “normal” challenges in a post-church world, we are not retreating but working to meet the needs head-on so future generations may know the Lord. We feel very blessed to be serving this part of the world, and we humbly seek your prayerful support in the efforts of the Florida-Georgia District as we work to equip, empower, and engage in the Master’s business—connecting people to Jesus.

Gregory S. Walton, *President*

R25

Indiana District

“One in Spirit and Purpose”

“There is 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.” Eph. 4:4–6

We “always [pray] ... with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel.” Phil. 1:4–5

The congregations of the Indiana District enjoy and celebrate those times when we work as a team—as partners in the Gospel—united by our common confession and purpose which begins at the baptismal font. Our convention was a great time for us to enjoy the Spirit’s leading us to confess and demonstrate to one another and the world our God-given faith and purpose as His people in this place!

OUR GOALS

In 2012 we set the goals of strengthening partnerships, beginning new congregations, and renewing struggling congregations. We have seen much of that happen as circuits have developed circuit, local, and regional plans for new mission starts and have begun developing new partnerships within their circuits and regions. In many cases this has also warmed the relationships between congregations and diminished the competitive atmosphere which can be an issue where we have clusters of congregations/schools.

Attendance at district conferences has improved and we have grown in our capacity to study, discuss, and learn together in wholesome dialogue. There is a growing sense of love and respect for one another throughout our district. We are seeing a cooperative attitude in many places!

Our convention theme last summer, “One in Spirit and Purpose,” grew out of Paul’s words to the Ephesians: “There is 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” (4:4–6).

This passage helped us affirm the connection between confession and mission and celebrate the bond of faith and love we have with one another. Circuit meetings and conferences have led us into significant biblical study and theological discussion. As we looked back, we found a strong desire among our people to be faithful and missional, but in many cases the know-how and direction was lacking in both areas.

It is for that reason that we are seeking to focus on a “balanced menu” of theological understanding and practical practice. “One in Spirit and Purpose” has served us well in setting in place our course for the new triennium. We are intentionally striving to maintain and strengthen our urban ministry opportunities. Indianapolis, Gary, Fort Wayne, and Louisville offer opportunities and challenges. This is not easy work, and finding workers with the heart and capacity for this work is a challenge. Funding these ministries is also a challenge, and we are beginning the process of partnering with the Synod in doing what we can do together and in what we cannot do alone. An example of this is our present attempt to open a new Lutheran school in Gary. We are also seeing some young families moving to our urban areas and we are trying to be there to welcome them, feed them, and engage them in the local and global mission of the church.

Our second goal is to “water the tall trees” as we encourage and support our large and growing suburban congregations. These congregations reach vast numbers of families and are often blessed with resources that are not enjoyed everywhere. As these large congregations expand, we are also asking them to partner with struggling

congregations in the cities and small towns. In order for this to happen in a healthy and productive way, we need to have compassionate relationships (*koinonia*). We are hoping that all circuits and congregations will take time to study 1 Corinthians 12–13 as they consider their brother pastors and sister congregations.

In our district we also have a number of small towns with one LCMS congregation. Whatever this congregation, pastor, and ministry looks like is the only picture people in such towns have of our church body. It is for this reason that we encourage a ministry style that hits in the “sweet middle” in terms and style and effort. Since people in these communities have only one “version” of the LCMS, we pray that our pastors and congregations will be faithful and focused. We want to do what we do well! We want to avoid being too “unique” in style and very clear on the substance of our confessional faith.

We are seeing that happen as pastors and congregations carefully and wisely discern their settings and communities. We do have aging congregations that are focusing not only on the needs of present members, but also on children and grandchildren who may not be active in the church at this time.

We have also sought to open new congregations in various parts of the district! We thank God for the grace in doing this and are very blessed to have new starts in more than ten mission fields identified by circuits, demographic studies, and district staff.

The Indiana District is grateful for our many preschools, elementary schools, and high schools! “Choice Dollars” (vouchers from the state) have allowed us to expand our enrollments and ministry to an increasing number of families outside of the church. Again, this is not easy, but it is a blessing. We did a district viability survey and found strong support for our district, and our viability was strongly affirmed!

We are seeking to be better stewards of the technology we have at this time in history. While the financial resources of the district are a bit uncertain in the short term, we enjoy a generally healthy and faithful stewardship attitude in this district. We live by faith, trusting God to provide the resources to do the ministry to which He has called us! Knowing that we are indeed “Baptized for This Moment,” we daily wrestle with the discernment to know which and how much of our gifts need to be devoted to local congregation opportunities, regional and district efforts, and synodwide ministries. We know that for us to have a healthy Synod we must have a healthy district, and in order for us to have a healthy district we need to have healthy congregations.

We are moving ahead with a bold faith in this new triennium, knowing that God is with us to guide us and bless us! May we always be, “One in Spirit and Purpose!” We know “there is 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” (Eph. 4:4–6).

With all of the LCMS, we “always [pray] ... with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel” (Phil. 1:4–5).

Daniel P. May, *President*

R26

Iowa District East

Iowa District East met in convention in June 2015. Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders was reelected President, Rev. Max Mons elected First Vice-President, Rev. Dr. Matthew Rueger elected Second Vice-President, Rev. Mark Brase reelected Secretary, and Mr. Corey Nuehring Treasurer. The primary goal of the district remains to be faithful to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.

In concordat with the 2013 LCMS convention asking each district to evaluate itself and its viability, we have concluded that Iowa District East is a viable district. The criteria for this evaluation as set by the 2013 convention was very helpful in reaching our conclusion. We are

a district of 120 congregations who are shepherded by faithful pastors. The resources for the district president to travel and make visits are provided. Oversight of doctrine and practice is being carried out for the sake of the flock and the community we wish to reach. We added a staff position that greatly assists our church workers and congregations with website design and advice. We have also transitioned one of the staff into the director of our Proclaiming Christ Jesus campaign. This campaign funds mission starts and their pastors. This effort has been helpful with encouragement to all the congregations working together for the sake of the Church at large helping a local ministry.

During this triennium, the district has assisted vacant congregations with call lists and the call process. At present, we have two vacancies. We hold two pastors conferences per year. While the pastors assemble for Winkel once a month, we have provided opportunity for the other church workers to gather once a month for study of the Word and discussion of a theological topic pertaining to their area of service. The district has expanded its international interests by partnering with the emerging Lutheran Church of Spain. President Saunders has been blessed with opportunities to travel to our partner churches in Lithuania and Siberia, where he taught and presented at pastors conferences.

The district continues to provide financial aid to our members who are studying for full-time church work. We support the two university campuses in eastern Iowa with Word and Sacrament ministry. We have one pastor to the deaf who travels great distances to bring the gifts of our Lord to those who cannot hear. This ministry is carried out in many different cities. Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca is under the care of two very capable servants and is a blessing to our congregations. A part-time chaplain is provided for LCMS members who are patients at the University of Iowa Hospital. The two mission congregations and the East Side Mission in Davenport are working hard to bring the Word of God to the citizens of their respective communities.

It is a continued goal of the district to locate areas of population where no LCMS congregation exists. Our efforts are to plant congregations with pastors to do the work of the Church in those locations. We are dearly blessed by our Lord with faithful pastors who tend their flock. Our schools are graced with wonderful principals and teachers for the sake of catechizing the children. In and through our confession, celebrated in the Divine Service and lived daily in vocations among our neighbor, Christ blesses His Church here in Iowa and in all the world.

Brian S. Saunders, *President*

R27

Iowa District West

Iowa District West (IDW) gives thanks to God for the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Paul Sieveking, who served as president of Iowa District West for 15 years. Under his leadership our district is financially sound and mission focused!

We are on a mission to support Christ's mission!

The district supports “congregations and their members in conserving and promoting the unity of faith and in *carrying out their mission* ... more effectively and efficiently together with other congregations” (Bylaw 1.3.3). IDW continues to be a leading district in the support of national and international mission work. We have continued to raise our financial commitment to the LCMS to 49 percent of the funds received from unrestricted congregation support. In 2017, God willing, we will reach our goal of 50 percent! Mission Central, a partnership between LCMS Office of International Mission, Iowa District West, and the Nebraska District is the largest mission

supporting agency in the Synod. Mission Central's goal is to "Raise the Awareness of the Lord's Mission in the District and World Wide."

Our Lutheran schools continue to provide quality, accredited Lutheran education. The district supports them through workshops and conferences for principals and teachers. The district also provides grants and support for mission work in and through our schools. Our 43 Lutheran preschools also provide quality Lutheran programs for families in our congregations and communities as an alternative to the state-sponsored preschool programs.

The district in partnership with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation provides a planned giving counselor to assist congregations and laity wishing to fund ministries through endowment and legacy gifts. IDW also partners with the Lutheran Church Extension Fund to provide an LCEF vice-president to serve our congregations, workers, and laity with investment opportunities, loans, and an arch of church extension services.

The district supports the faith formation of our young people for Christian life in this rapidly changing world. The district continues to host annual youth gatherings, facilitate national youth gatherings, coordinate servant events and mission trips, and it works with Camp Okoboji in summer camp programs.

The district supports our congregations in showing the mercy of Christ and addresses human needs in their own midst and in their communities. We maintain a strong partnership with Lutheran Family Service that now shares space in the district office building. Over 500 of our members have been trained to be Lutheran Early Responders. We have four LERT trailers fully equipped to quickly respond in times of disaster anywhere they might strike. Operation Barnabas Chapters seek to serve our military personnel and their families during and after deployment.

This past year has been challenging and exciting for our district. We have a new district president and many new members of the board of directors. We believe that Iowa District West is not only viable but uniquely blessed by God with the resources and people to support the mission and ministry of the district and the Synod.

Evaluation of "District Viability" re 2013 Res. 7-04A

2013 LCMS Res. 7-04A requested our evaluation of our district viability. The respondents to our request for such feedback, via the survey provided, were overwhelmingly positive in holding to the opinion that Iowa District West is indeed "viable." The resources of the district are being used to support the congregations, schools, and other ministries within our state; the district staff is attentive to the needs of these ministries; and above all, God's precious Word is being shared throughout the western half of Iowa!

1. Is Iowa District West a geographical size and configuration to be effective, efficient, and capable of serving all who make up its constituency?
Right Size—92.86% Smaller—7.14% Large—0.00% No Opinion—0.00%
2. Does Iowa District West receive sufficient financial resources from its membership to meet its financial responsibilities and obligations to (i) support the mission and ministry of the church in the district and (ii) financially assist the mission and ministry of the Synod?
Adequate—67.86% Not Enough—7.86% More Than Enough—3.57% No Opinion—10.71%
3. Does Iowa District West leadership adapt to new circumstances and meet changing needs related to the mission and ministry of the church?
Always—7.14% Almost Always—42.86% Frequently—46.43% Seldom—0.00% Never—0.00% No Opinion—3.57%
4. Does Iowa District West staff provide encouragement, appropriate guidance and support (e.g., stewardship, conflict resolution, crisis counseling, financial counseling, calling process, collaborative efforts, networking, nourishment, and help with evangelistic outreach) to

member congregations for participating in the mission God has given to the Church?

Always—21.43% Almost Always—28.57% Frequently—39.29% Seldom—3.57% Never—0.00% No Opinion—7.14%

5. Does Iowa District West staff provide encouragement and support for Lutheran preschools, elementary, and high schools?
Always—25.00% Almost Always—35.71% Frequently—10.71% Seldom—3.57% Never—0.00% No Opinion—25.00%
6. Does the Iowa District West Board of Directors provide adequate resources for the district president or his representative (vice-president or circuit visitor) in carrying out the minimum requirements for official visits to each congregation and its pastor, at least once every three years, to be a brotherly adviser, "reminding them of the joy of serving in the mission and ministry of the church"?
Adequate—60.71% Not Enough—25.00% More Than Enough—10.71% No Opinion—3.57%
7. Does the Iowa District West Board of Directors provide adequate resources for the district president to carry out ecclesiastical supervision of congregations and workers in a reasonable and timely manner defined in the Synod's Constitution as "evangelical encouragement and support, care, protection, counsel, advice, admonition, and, when necessary, appropriate disciplinary measures"?
Adequate—67.86% Not Enough—10.71% More Than Enough—10.71% No Opinion—10.71%
8. Based on your answers thus far to the questions asked regarding how well Iowa District West is meeting the "general principles of viability," to what extent is the district capable of carrying out its purpose and functions?
Very Strong—42.86% Strong—25.00% Sustainable—32.14% Weak—0.00% No Opinion—0.00%

Steven D. Turner, *President*

R28

Kansas District

The LCMS Kansas District was formed by the Synod in 1888 and is comprised of 163 congregations, 15 parochial elementary schools, and 47 preschools. For the last number of years, we have carried out our common work under the theme that "the servant mission of the Kansas District is to equip, encourage, and empower each congregation in its mission and Christ-care ministry."

In early 2014, we began a new process of strategic planning in consultation with J. David Schmidt and Associates to identify vision targets, breakthrough goals, and possible initiatives. While considerable progress has been made in developing a strategic plan, several things—including preparations for our district conventions, the election of a new district president and board of directors, and the pressing need to give attention to staffing and budget matters—have all contributed to delaying a final product. However, we are now resuming work on that strategic plan in order to identify goals for the new triennium.

Two assignments that were given to us by the Synod during the past triennium were to realign our circuits and to evaluate the viability of the Kansas District.

The need for realignment grew out of declining congregational membership, especially in western Kansas, together with a very different dynamic in Johnson County (Kansas City). There we have six congregations in each of two circuits (one short of the required number), with a total of approximately 4,400 members in each circuit, and one congregation in each circuit having a second campus. By redrawing some circuit boundaries in the west, we were able to bring all of our electoral circuits into compliance with Synod Bylaws. No changes were made to the two Johnson County circuits, and we once again requested an exception that they each be allowed to be represented by two delegates, though each circuit has only six congregations.

In response to the Synod's 2013 Res. 7-04A, the Kansas District evaluated its viability through its executive council and board of

directors. In doing so, we considered and discussed the eight criteria put forward in 2013 Res. 7-04A, according to which district viability is to be measured. At its January 2016 meeting, the Kansas District board of directors adopted Res. 16A-06-04, concluding that the Kansas District is indeed viable according to these eight criteria.

Official visitation according to Synod Bylaw 4.4.4 also received considerable attention during the past triennium, this in keeping with 2013 Res. 7-01A. Following a presentation to our circuit visitors and praesidium by President Dean Nadasdy of the Minnesota South District, the Kansas District appointed a committee to customize a plan for the Kansas District based on the model presented to us by President Nadasdy. The resulting plan was discussed by our circuit visitors in October 2015 and January 2016 and has now been adopted for action. The district president, together with the circuit visitors and vice-presidents, have set the goal of visiting all 163 congregations of the district during the next triennium and each triennium thereafter.

The past triennium was not without its challenges, of course. Our district lost one part-time and two full-time staff members in the areas of missions and stewardship. After a time of uncertainty and reevaluating, we have now budgeted to fill two of these positions in 2016, by calling an executive for missions and stewardship and by hiring an administrative assistant to assist him.

In the area of international missions, our 19-year association with mission work in Guinea, West Africa, has changed significantly because, for the time being, the LCMS is no longer deploying missionaries to Guinea. However, we are in close conversation with the LCMS Office of International Mission (OIM) to explore new areas of cooperation in international missions. In terms of national missions, the Kansas District is working to strengthen its ties to the Office of National Mission (ONM). In January 2016, the executive director of the ONM, Rev. Bart Day, came and spoke at length to our district board of directors to show some areas where the Kansas District might partner more closely with the ONM. Witness and Outreach, Church Planting, Re:Vitality, Rural and Small Town, Disaster Response, Stewardship, and Hispanic Ministry are among those areas. Our district has also appointed a “life coordinator” to work more closely with LCMS Life Ministry, as well as with Lutherans For Life. Lastly, the Kansas District will begin mentoring our new pastors through the Post Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) program.

In October 2013, our district began an initiative which we called “Renewal in Wellness” to focus the attention of our workers and congregations on worker health. For the following two years, this was the unifying theme of all conferences and conventions up to and including our fall workers’ conference in October 2015. In addition, there were monthly articles in our publications as well as numerous other resources and undertakings. A team of two district executive staff members plus one circuit visitor worked closely with the Concordia Plan Services’ Ministerial Care Coalition to guide this process. As part of this emphasis, our district is also serving as one of three pilot districts for the national LCMS Church Worker Family Needs Assessment, which is under the direction of Concordia Plan Services, the LCMS Office of National Mission, and the Concordia Center for the Family at Concordia University Wisconsin. The goal is to use survey results to assist districts in strengthening care for church workers and their spouses and families. Lastly in this area, our 24-month “Renewal in Wellness” emphasis has now led to restarting our district’s Church Worker Care Committee, under the oversight of the Board for Caring Ministry.

As we move into a new triennium, my prayer is that we as the Kansas District will be ever more faithful, bold, intentional, and unified in confessing Jesus Christ and Him crucified to a dying world. And in centering all our work together upon this rock, I pray that the Lord will lead each of us daily to repent of our sins, confess Him

before others, and rejoice in the saving gifts He gives through His Holy Christian Church.

Peter K. Lange, *President*

R29

Michigan District

Focusing on the **critical targets of Great Commission Ministry, Great Compassion Ministry, Healthy Congregations, and Healthy Church Workers**, the Michigan District has effectively served the congregations and church workers in its care. We continually strive to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” We will also boldly “consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:23–25).

The 2013 Res. 7-04A asked that **district presidents evaluate their respective districts and provide the evaluation as part of this report**. The survey was sent to all congregations and church workers in 2015. The majority of the comments were very positive about ministry and support in the Michigan District. Listed below are the results from the survey.

Does the district ...

1. Provide resources for the district president to carry out ecclesiastical supervision as defined in the Synod’s Constitution in a reasonable and timely manner?

Yes	89%
No	7%
No Response	4%

2. Provide resources for the district president in carrying out the minimum requirements for official visits to each of the member congregations, including coming to the pastors and member congregations at least once every three years as a brotherly adviser, “reminding them of the joy of serving in the mission and ministry of the church”?

Yes	69%
No	24%
No Response	7%

3. Provide appropriate guidance and support to member congregations for participating in the mission God has given to the church, including how that is carried out in the various missions and ministries of the church?

Yes	87%
No	6%
No Response	7%

4. Provide encouragement and needed congregational services to member congregations, and provide advice and counsel to member congregations struggling to carry out their core functions?

Yes	87%
No	6%
No Response	7%

5. Adapt to new circumstances and meet changing needs related to the mission and ministry of the church?

Yes	87%
No	5%
No Response	8%

6. Meet its financial responsibilities and obligations, and receive sufficient financial resources from its membership to support the mission and ministry of the church in the district and financially assist the mission and ministry of the Synod?

Yes	76%
No	16%
No Response	8%

7. Find itself to be of a size and configuration to be effective, efficient, and capable of serving all who make up its constituency?
- | | |
|-------------|-----|
| Yes | 74% |
| No | 18% |
| No Response | 8% |
8. Provide adequate assistance and support to allow the district president to carry out the obligations of the office of district president as set forth in the Bylaws?
- | | |
|-------------|-----|
| Yes | 82% |
| No | 6% |
| No Response | 12% |

Under the theme of “IMAGINE ... Living as God’s Loved and Compassionate Community,” the **2015 Michigan District Convention** was held on June 28–30 on the campus of Concordia University, Ann Arbor. The theme, which highlighted the “Mercy” emphasis of the Synod’s three foci, also established an emphasis for the next triennium for Michigan District congregations. Rev. Dr. R. Reed Lessing, senior pastor of St. Michael, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and former professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was the convention essayist.

Of note at the district convention was Res. 1-03, “To Support the *Here We Stand* Initiative in Celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation,” which was adopted with a 94.2 percent majority. This 500th anniversary effort will include an all-district Reformation service that will take place on October 15, 2017, at the Breslin Center on the campus of Michigan State University, where 12,000–15,000 are expected for the 4:00 p.m. worship service. It also includes a \$10 million ministry campaign which has four emphases:

1. Church worker scholarships (\$3 million)
2. Innovative mission and ministry (\$3 million)
3. The Michigan District Endowment (\$3 million)
4. International ministry (\$1 million)

Several **major conferences** were planned and held to encourage and further develop pastors and professional church workers during the past 3 years:

- 2013 All Pastors’ Conference with the theme of *Spiritual Disciplines*, including Dr. John Kleinig as guest speaker
- 2014 Professional Church Worker Conference for all professional church workers in the district, held in Dearborn under the theme *Imagine Immeasurably More*
- 2015 All Pastors’ Conference with the theme of *Jesus at the Leading Edge*, with Mr. Carl Medearis as the main speaker

We are **thankful for our schools, their administrators and teachers**, and for the spirit of discipleship and outreach that pervades our educational systems. Over 14,000 students attend an LCMS-sponsored early childhood center, elementary school, or high school in Michigan. God uses these ministries to help parents in their role of nurturing their children’s faith. Daily, over 1,000 adults share Christ through these ministries and raise up and inspire our children, youth, and young adult students to be *People of Hope* who are rooted in Christ Jesus.

Concordia University, Ann Arbor (CUAA), is the Michigan campus of Concordia University Wisconsin (one university, two residential campuses). Thanksgiving is regularly given to our Lord for this relationship and for the ensuing health of CUAA. Not only has the school continued to grow (this fall will be the first time there will be 1,000 full-time students), but it will expand its educational offerings by opening its Nursing School in the newly purchased North Building (86,000 sq. ft. that was the former Cooley Law School Building). The Physical Therapy (PT) and Athletic Training (AT) programs will also be housed in the North Building, which will still have space for additional programs. Perhaps the highlight of the Ann Arbor campus is

the campus spirit. It is Gospel-focused and contagious, bringing a full house to the Sanctuary of the Holy Trinity for worship on an almost daily basis. We were also thankful for Mrs. Heidi Swanson and the students involved in the Worship Arts Leadership program who took a major part in leading the music for the worship that took place at our 2015 All Pastors’ Conference.

We are thankful for our partnership with *FiveTwo* and Pastor Bill Woolsey for the expertise, wisdom, practical know-how, and coaching that they bring to bear for our congregations in our mission and ministry efforts. We are a Word and Sacrament church recognizing the great gifts God has graciously given. We trust God’s promises in Isaiah 55:10–11, “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and in the thing for which I sent it,” and know that God’s Gospel Word, the power of God unto salvation, still has power and still brings a harvest. Living as what God has intended for us to be, the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt. 5:13–16) within our communities, we strive to start new ministries (**Start New to Reach New**) that will make an impact in our communities, allow His light to shine, and allow opportunities for sharing truth. We believe that although not all “ministry” is Word and Sacrament ministry, all “ministry” should lead to Word and Sacrament ministry. Starting something new—whether it is a new worship service, Bible study, mercy ministry, food or clothing bank, or whatever God leads you to start—and then helping others through that ministry or inviting others to that ministry remains the best way to reach new people.

The **Michigan District Church Extension Fund (CEF)** is separately incorporated from the district and thrives under the continuing, capable leadership of Mr. Ronald Steinke. CEF has been and continues to be a great blessing to the district.

We are excited about the future, about the continuing mission and ministry in the Michigan District and about starting NEW mission and ministry efforts over the next three years under the theme “IMAGINE ... Living as God’s Loved and Compassionate Community.” We will do so always remembering that it is “Upon This Rock,” Jesus Christ our crucified and risen Lord, that we “Repent, Confess, Rejoice.” We are truly thankful for what Jesus has done in the past but are also hope-filled about what He will yet do to reach His lost people in the years ahead. **Truly, in Christ Jesus, the BEST is yet to come!**

David P. E. Maier, *President*

R30

Mid-South District



The continuation and expansion of the ministry and mission of the Mid-South District continues to be expressed in the words of our mission statement:

As an alliance of congregations and schools, the Mid-South District provides leadership, resources, and encouragement for reaching the lost for Christ’s kingdom and equipping the found for service in our churches, communities, and world.

Our vision statement became this:

We see every ministry reaching the lost and discipling the found.

For the 2015 district convention, we chose the theme “O God, Our Help in Ages Past, Our Hope for Years to Come.” The theme provided the convention and the member congregations of the Mid-South District a means to encourage their members to be equipped as the priesthood of all believers and make significant strides to touch the lives in the communities we live in.

The Mid-South District was founded on the principle of mission and outreach to the lost for the mid-South area. The convention encouraged delegates to think and consider means by which they could touch the lives of those who are unchurched and dechurched in their immediate area and around the world. We launched an effort called “Each One—Reach One” that will equip, encourage, and enable every member of our district to build up the kingdom of God as He wills and provides.

During the past three years, the board of directors and executive staff have diligently worked to bring about a greater awareness of what steps are needed to provide the necessary resources to assist congregations to become stronger in their own context and assemble use of precious resources. A stronger emphasis has been placed on assisting congregational leadership to be faithful stewards of the gifts God offers to reach further into our communities through meaningful participation in the community by the congregation’s membership. In order to keep a solid footing for the financial concerns of the district, implementation of Impact Ministries began, raising \$1.4 million in funds to support missions and ministries.

The district has encouraged the smaller congregations to explore cooperative relationships with community and other neighboring LCMS congregations. Larger congregations have been encouraged to foster “mother-daughter” relationships in their outreach and auxiliary efforts. More educational opportunities have been provided by the district for specific ministry pastor and licensed lay deacon program participants. Formal arrangements to formalize deacon and continuing-education programs for all church workers have been accomplished through the CUS, involving Portland, Wisconsin, New York, and our Synod’s two seminaries.

Congregations have been encouraged to continue efforts in meaningful alliances with other congregations, whereby either new mission opportunities can be explored and developed or the combining of resources enables a way in which essential ministries may continue in a more efficient fashion.

The 2015 district convention continued its support (by resolution) of church planting, the SELVD outreach in Tanzania, the revised licensed lay deacon program, and Trinity Hope, Haiti. In addition, the Mid-South District has participated in mission projects in Peru, Kenya, and Cambodia, as well as a special project for the Lutheran Church in Madagascar. There, the Mid-South District raised enough funds to purchase computers and Internet connections for the Lutheran Institute headed by Pastor Joseph Randrianasolo.

The district renewed its fostering and support of its church planting, including new church plants in Tennessee in Nashville, Chattanooga, and Sharps Chapel; an Ethiopian immigrant mission with Faith Lutheran in Thompson’s Station, Tennessee; and a Hispanic ministry in Springdale, Arkansas. Although a church-planting training site has been offered through the district, more emphasis has been placed on training potential church planters for the Mid-South District with a greater possibility of calling these men to the district.

There have been 18 congregations that have participated in the district’s vitality project called COMPASS. In addition, the Mid-South District developed and received copyright on a congregational assessment resource (C.A.R.) tool that measures more than 100 vital

pieces of data for a congregation and compares the data and ratios to a total number of other congregations in the registry. Both of those products have been presented to the Council of Presidents, LCMS leadership, Concordia Plan Services, and LCEF.

The Mid-South District will provide the leadership, resources, and encouragement for congregations and schools to develop an outward-focused vision for mission and ministry. Several initiatives have been prayerfully introduced, considered, or implemented for this next triennium:

- Reestablish a Small and Rural Congregation Council
- Annual Town Hall meetings to ascertain the needs and resource potentials of each congregation
- Consolidate the offices of education and mission executive
- Expand a district mission board with broad-spectrum representation, including membership in US Center for Mission with Dr. Peter Meier
- Conduct congregational surveys for demand of district’s “Essential Services Resource”
- Develop cooperative use of congregational and circuit-wide resources for mission and ministry
- Develop a tool for congregations to evaluate their schools and early childhood centers (C.A.R.)
- Develop efficiency and accountability in the church-planting program to maximize use of limited and valuable resources
- Provide significant funding for lay deacons to enter SMP programs
- Establish a district-wide stewardship council to assist congregations, schools, and auxiliaries with stewardship training
- Establish “Funding the Ministry” project to assist congregations and schools with stronger financial foundation
- Assist congregations in our four-state make-up through a special ad hoc committee to advise on policies in response to same-sex marriage rulings
- Convert board of director and auxiliary organizations of the district to “paperless” documents using BoardEffect
- Expand treasurers’ workshops and training on QuickBooks Accounting
- Continue and expand fund-raising efforts to support the essential services of the district to its membership
- Expand the *Encourager* for general use by all members of the congregation and provide “Mid-South Minute” as a communication tool for church workers
- Formalize support and training for pastors’ wives retreats
- Celebrate the district’s 50th anniversary

The Mid-South District continues its focus on the mission and ministry entrusted to us under the privilege and stewardship of workers for the kingdom of God and to His glory. To that end, the district conducted an extensive evaluation of its viability, as directed by the 2013 LCMS convention Res. 7-04A. The evaluation discovered significant support in resources of personnel and systems. We further recognize a declining trend in congregational membership, and, as a result of national economics, a declining commitment support on the part of member congregations. Another factor impacting our vision of the future is the wide geographic and demographic nature of our district. The geographic size and the relatively small number of congregations in the over 500,000 square miles we cover make logistical coverage somewhat more difficult than other geographic districts. The “high-water marks” for the district for number of congregations, membership, and financial commitments occurred more than a decade past. Our plan with “Each One—Reach One” is to bring a significant upturn of our ability and privilege to serve our member congregations and the kingdom of God.

Roger Paavola, *President*

R31

Minnesota North District

The Minnesota North District is made up of 198 congregations; an African immigrant ministry (Anyuak); Ministry to the Deaf; 7 Campus Ministries; 7 elementary schools; 21 preschools/day-care centers; a summer chapel ministry located adjacent to a resort; and a year-round camp ministry. Reported statistics (2014) were as follows: 55,681 baptized and 43,507 confirmed; 221 pastors and 78 commissioned.

Recognizing that we are surrounded by a culture where absolute truth has been replaced by personal preference and opinion and those who strive to hold on to God's truth and confess it are branded as out-of-touch, closed-minded and bigoted, our district convention theme for this triennium was selected as a guiding beacon: ***“Word of Truth, to All Truth Lead Us”*** based on Isaiah 2:2–4 [***“Upon This Rock”***]. As public opinion changes on a wide spectrum of beliefs and values, there is always the danger that we, almost without realizing it, relinquish our firm hold on God's truth, that our focus on what God has said becomes fuzzy and blurred, and that we over time grow tired of resisting [***“Repent”***]. In an effort to assist our congregations, schools, ministries, church workers, and laypeople to be on guard, aware of current issues, and able to respond and give a faithful witness, we have joined with the Minnesota South District, who called Rev. Fred Hinz to serve as public policy advocate to assist in this endeavor. Also, our 2015 Pastors' Conference focused on ***“Speaking God's Word ... In the Legislative Process ... In the Public Square.”*** A joint conference for church workers and laity on ***“Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty”*** was conducted with the North Dakota District. Our Synod-district life coordinator has provided materials and conducted ***“Making Abortion Unthinkable”*** workshops. [***“Confess”***]

The following resources were provided to support our congregations, schools, ministries, and church workers: ***“Engaging Your Community”*** workshops; church worker wives' retreats; pastors' conferences; teachers' conferences; disability workshops; lay leadership training; treasurers' workshops; parenting workshops; pre-retirement workshops for church workers; ***Life Together*** events; new workers' orientation; retired church worker appreciation luncheon; ***“Church Reconciler”*** training; youth ministry training; and a established response team to deal with allegations of sexual misconduct by professional church workers. Rev. Ed Behling serves as our church worker care coordinator and Rev. Dr. Larry Harvala is our congregational care counselor.

During this triennium, the district has given financial support for Project Wittenberg; Project 24 in Kenya with the North Dakota District; Christ's Care for Children: Kenya; work at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and School in Cotton Tree, Liberia; advanced theological education for a Liberian pastor at the seminary in Fort Wayne; college tuition for a student from Liberia attending Concordia University, St. Paul; high school tuition for a student from Liberia attending Mayer Lutheran High School; church worker scholarships; as well as our Lutheran elementary schools through the ***“Congregations Reaching Out to Support Schools (CROSS) Appeal”*** and the ***“Sowers' Fund,”*** which assists church workers when there are special needs. [***“Rejoice”***]

In fulfillment of 2013 Res. 7-04A, a survey was sent out to evaluate the Minnesota North District in light of the general principles for judging the viability of a district. The results are as follows.

I am ...

Answer	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Chairman of a Minnesota North District congregation	15	13.6%
Clergy—Active	48	43.6%
Clergy—Emeritus	14	12.7%
Commissioned—Active	13	11.8%
Commissioned—Emeritus	6	5.4%
Board of Directors	14	12.7%
Totals	110	100%

Is the Minnesota North District a geographical size and configuration to be effective, efficient, and capable of serving all who make up its constituency?

Answer	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Too Small	5	4.5%
Just the Right Size	63	57.2%
Too Big	14	12.7%
No Opinion	21	19.0%
Insufficient Knowledge to Answer	7	6.3%
No Response	0	0.0%
Totals	110	100%

Does the Minnesota North District receive sufficient financial resources from its membership to meet its financial responsibilities and obligations to (i) support the mission and ministry of the church in the district and (ii) financially assist the mission and ministry of the Synod?

Answer	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Not Enough	21	19.0%
Adequate	59	53.6%
More Than Enough	1	<1.0%
No Opinion	4	3.6%
Insufficient Knowledge to Answer	25	22.7%
No Response	0	0.0%
Totals	110	100%

Does the Minnesota North District leadership adapt to new circumstances and meet changing needs related to the mission and ministry of the church?

Answer	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Never	0	0.0%
Almost Never	1	<1.0%
Seldom	6	5.4%
Frequently	32	29.0%
Almost Always	30	27.2%
Always	19	17.2%
No Opinion	11	10.0%
Insufficient Knowledge to Answer	11	10.0%
No Response	0	0.0%
Totals	110	100%

Does the Minnesota North District staff provide encouragement, appropriate guidance, and support (e.g., stewardship, conflict resolution, crisis counseling, financial counseling, calling process, collaborative efforts, networking, nourishment, and help with evangelistic outreach, etc.) to member congregations for participating in the mission God has given to the Church?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>Response Ratio</i>
Never	0	0.0%
Almost Never	1	<1.0%
Seldom	12	10.9%
Frequently	24	21.8%
Almost Always	37	33.6%
Always	27	24.5%
No Opinion	2	1.8%
Insufficient Knowledge to Answer	7	6.3%
No Response	0	0.0%
Totals	110	100%

Does the Minnesota North District staff provide encouragement and support for our Lutheran preschools and elementary schools?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>Response Ratio</i>
Never	1	<1.0%
Almost Never	0	0.0%
Seldom	5	4.5%
Frequently	23	20.9%
Almost Always	19	17.2%
Always	29	26.3%
No Opinion	6	5.4%
Insufficient Knowledge to Answer	27	24.5%
No Response	0	0.0%
Totals	110	100%

Does the Minnesota North District board of directors provide adequate resources for the district president or his representative (vice-president or circuit visitor) in carrying out the minimum requirements for official visits to each congregation and its pastor, at least once every three years, to be a brotherly adviser, “reminding them of the joy of serving in the mission and ministry of the church” (Bylaw 4.4.4 [d])?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>Response Ratio</i>
Not Enough	13	11.8%
Adequate	51	46.3%
More Than Enough	3	2.7%
No Opinion	8	7.2%
Insufficient Knowledge to Answer	34	30.9%
No Response	1	<1.0%
Totals	110	100 %

Does the Minnesota North District board of directors provide adequate resources for the district president to carry out ecclesiastical supervision of congregations and workers, in a reasonable and timely manner, defined in the Synod’s Constitution as “evangelical encouragement and support, care, protection, counsel, advice, admonition, and, when necessary, appropriate disciplinary measures” (1.2.1 [i])?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>Response Ratio</i>
Not Enough	11	10.0 %
Adequate	52	47.2%
More Than Enough	4	3.6%
No Opinion	6	5.4%
Insufficient Knowledge to Answer	37	33.6%
No Response	0	0.0%
Totals	110	100%

Based on what you have determined above, how do you see the viability of your district in light of these general principles, and to what extent is your district capable of carrying out its purpose and functions?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>	<i>Response Ratio</i>
Not Viable	0	0.0%
Somewhat Viable	12	10.9%
Viable	53	48.1%
Very Viable	35	31.8%
No Opinion	1	<1.0%
Insufficient Knowledge to Answer	9	8.1%
No Response	0	0.0%
Totals	110	100%

As we move forward, it is our prayer that the Lord will lead us to hold firmly to the Word of Truth, celebrating and cherishing our heritage as confessional Lutherans and all that it entails, especially as we observe the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017. May God continue to bless this small corner of His church: the LCMS Minnesota North District. May He keep us faithful, may He give us joy in our labor, and may He always keep our eyes focused on the cross where He died for us and on the heavens from which He will come again to take us home.

Donald J. Fondow, *President*

R32

Minnesota South District

In the last triennium, the Minnesota South (MNS) District continued its emphasis on planting new churches and ministries, strengthening the mission of existing congregations and schools, and building concord and harmony in the district through both our district-wide Koinonia Project and visitation on every level.

The past triennium was also characterized by significant staff changes and additions. In 2013, Dr. William Utech joined our district staff as assistant to the president for missions, and later that year Dr. Phil Johnson came on staff as assistant to the president for mission formation. Their predecessors, Dr. Peter Meier and Mike Zimmer, served the district with great effectiveness and zeal.

In 2014, we added a second assistant for mission formation, Rev. Fred Hinz, to focus on rural and small-town congregations. Pastor Hinz was also asked to develop an approach to public policy advocacy in our district and now serves as public policy advocate for both the Minnesota South and Minnesota North districts. That same year, Rick Marko joined the staff as treasurer/business manager, succeeding Lu Clemmensen, who had faithfully served the district for 41 years. Also joining us in 2014 was Billy Schultz, who serves as the district’s first full-time director of communications and missions support. In 2015, Sean Martens began serving full time as assistant for Christian education and commissioned workers, a position he had held on a part-time basis. We are so blessed to welcome these gifted servant leaders as resources to our congregations, pastors, and workers.

Circuit and congregational visits in 2014–15 revealed three challenges faced by many of our congregations: declining or plateaued worship attendance, aging membership, and financial stress. A second round of visits in 2015–16 will seek to address each of these three challenges with grass-roots input and approaches appropriate to different ministry settings. A 2015 district-wide survey checking the attitudes of our pastors, workers, and lay people drew more than 500 responses and revealed both deep concerns and genuine hope for the future of our churches and their mission.

Our June 18–20, 2015, district convention gathered around the theme “On Our Way Rejoicing,” based on Acts 8:39. The theme focused us on the new believer, dripping wet with baptismal grace, sent on his way rejoicing in the Lord. Incumbent President Dean Nadasdy was reelected on the first ballot to a second term.

Among the actions taken by the 2015 district convention were the following: (1) to continue to encourage the planting of new churches through the New Church Incubator; (2) to encourage the congregations and individuals toward joyful formation of and participation in new mission ventures; (3) to add a full-time assistant for Christian education and commissioned workers; (4) to limit the service of the district president to four consecutive three-year terms; (5) to develop a comprehensive campus-ministry plan, which will include the needs of University Lutheran Chapel, Minneapolis; (6) to affirm the district and Synod emphasis on visitation; (7) to continue and expand the Koinonia Project; (8) to encourage intentional leadership in matters of public policy; (9) to urge church members and elected officials to value, exercise, and protect religious freedom; (10) to encourage the State of Minnesota to establish parental choice equality in education funding; (11) to affirm and encourage the ministry of directors of Christian education; and (12) to approve a feasibility study for a special funding appeal to support MNS District education initiatives.

In 2015, the newly elected district board of directors defined the mission of the MNS District as “cultivating leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God.” They also adopted the following promise statement, clearly stating what congregations, pastors, and workers can expect from those who serve them in the MNS District: “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.”

The board of directors, as in the previous triennium, also established initiatives for the new triennium. The district staff reports quarterly to the board regarding progress in each of the initiatives. These eleven initiatives for 2015–18 will guide the work of the MNS District:

1. *Oneness*. To nurture our growing unity, concord, and harmony (Ephesians 4:1–3)
2. *Meeting Expressed Challenges*. To help congregations address their most urgent, self-identified challenges: aging membership, declining attendance, and financial stresses (Matthew 6:25–26)
3. *Christian Education*. To strengthen our existing schools and early childhood centers and expand education ministries (Matthew 19:14)
4. *New Outreach Ministries*. To encourage and support congregations and individuals in developing new outreach ministries in their communities (1 Pet. 2:9)
5. *Wellness*. To provide resources that promote wellness among church workers, their families, and congregations (Mark 12:30–31)
6. *Church Planting*. To encourage congregations to support the planting of new churches by participating in the New Church Incubator (Luke 19:10–27)
7. *Campus Ministry*. To develop and execute a comprehensive plan for campus ministry (Psalm 78:1–7)
8. *Excellence in Preaching*. In celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, to move toward more excellent proclamation of the Word (2 Tim. 4:2)
9. *Professional Conduct*. To hold one another accountable for conduct worthy of the Gospel of Christ (Phil. 1:27)
10. *Best Practices*. To train leaders in implementing best practices for ministry (Phil. 4:8–9)
11. *Public Policy Advocacy*. To advocate for scriptural truth in the following areas of public policy: marriage and sexuality, sanctity of life, religious freedom, and parental choice in education (1 Pet. 2:11–12)

In January of 2016, in response to 2013 Res. 7-04A, the MNS District conducted a survey regarding the resolution’s general principles of viability as applied to our district, with 174 pastors, commissioned workers, and lay people participating. Overwhelmingly, the ratings and comments affirmed the viability of the MNS District in regard to the general principles outlined in Res. 7-04A.

The MNS District looks forward to its first new church plant using our New Church Incubator development model. We are observing 2016 as a Year of Wellness, emphasizing through several opportunities the health of our pastors, workers, and congregations. The year 2017 will bring phase two of the Koinonia Project to our district. Reformation hymn sings, lectures, and German suppers have been scheduled in each of the four regions of the district in 2015–18. A Reformation festival service on Oct. 29th, 2017, at Concordia University, St. Paul, will bring together the Minnesota North and Minnesota South Districts as we celebrate together the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Dean Nadasdy, *President*

R33

Missouri District

The Missouri District is composed of 298 congregations totaling more than 128,000 baptized members and 112 educational ministries (9 high schools, 53 elementary schools, and 50 freestanding pre-schools) with more than 14,000 students enrolled. The district has chartered two new congregations (Praise and Worship in Branson and The Exchange Community in Jackson) and celebrates the establishment of two new high schools (Farmington and Platte City).

The Missouri District held its 19th regular convention under the theme “Put Out into the Deep” based upon Luke 5:4. The convention essayist was Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier. Maier encouraged the delegates that “with God’s help, anything and everything can be accomplished, as it did when He told Simon to lower his net for a catch; and that it is necessary to look into the future and with the Holy Spirit’s guidance, determine what it would look like to ‘put out into the deep.’” Special guests included the Synod President, Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, who led a Bible study, and Rev. Dr. Herbert Mueller, who served as the preacher at the opening Divine Service. In his report to the convention, President Ray Mirly highlighted the three emphases of the 2012–2015 triennium: (1) increase and improve relationships with congregations, ordained and commissioned ministers, schools, parishioners, and partners; (2) support congregations, schools, pastors, other called church workers, and others to give bold witness to the triune God and to extend their Gospel witness to the world; (3) establish a comprehensive funding model for the district. He also noted that in his nine years of leadership, 55 new missions had been started in the district.

The convention adopted resolutions encouraging church planting, ethnic outreach, and mission collaboration. The convention also adopted a resolution to align the district’s work with the Synod’s “Witness, Mercy, Life Together” emphases. Since President Mirly had previously announced his plans to retire, the district convention honored him at a banquet where a Service of Farewell and Godspeed was conducted for President and Mrs. Mirly. The convention also passed an overture giving thanks for President Mirly’s faithful service to the district and the Synod and naming him as president emeritus.

The convention elected Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan to his first term as district president. Also elected were Rev. William Marler as first vice-president, Rev. Dr. Ronald Rall as second vice-president, Rev. Alan Wollenburg as third vice-president, and Rev. Brian Thieme as fourth vice-president.

The vision for this triennium, “Faithful Witnesses,” has four areas of emphasis. They are “Growing Together in the Word,” “Healthy Servants,” “Peaceful Ministries,” and “Mission-Focused Congregations.”

Growing Together in the Word—The 500th anniversary of the Reformation provides an opportunity for a renewed emphasis on the study of God’s Word. The intent is that the professional conferences would include significant time and emphasis on the study of the Word for the growth and edification of ordained and commissioned ministers.

Healthy Servants—The Missouri District will provide support to better care for its workers. Staff member Rev. Gene Wyssmann will devote more time and energy to this area. The district is also adding volunteer chaplains and a deaconess to better care for our workers.

Peaceful Ministries—The District is partnering with Ambassadors of Reconciliation to offer a district-wide workshop and to also offer cycles of training for the circuit visitors, district reconcilers, praesidium, and interested commissioned ministers.

Mission-Focused Congregations—There will be a district-wide outreach emphasis in 2017. The Plus One Initiative is assisting every congregation to reach out to its respective community in one new way. This initiative will include an outreach conference that will include partners such as the LCMS Office of National Mission, Lutheran Hour Ministries, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, and Concordia Seminary. An equally important component will be training 60 facilitators to work with congregations across the district to implement and evaluate their plans for community engagement. The district service boards are working in collaboration to prepare for this emphasis with staff member Rev. Dr. Stuart Brassie.

The district leadership has been involved in discussions with the Office of National Mission and congregations in north St. Louis County after the unrest in Ferguson. Efforts are underway toward establishing “The Lutheran Hope Center” in Ferguson to focus on teaching the Christian faith to children and families and on “mercy” work for those in need. Another area of particular growth is outreach to Nepalese and Burmese immigrants and refugees in South St. Louis through congregations working in conjunction with Christian Friends of New Americans. There are an increasing number of congregations working in partnership across the district. These partnerships often include large and small parishes in small towns, urban, and suburban settings. The district granted more than \$2.3 million in the triennium for district mission efforts.

Dennis Gehrke retired as assistant to the president for Lutheran schools after nearly ten years of service. Alan Freeman succeeded Gehrke in this role in spring 2016. Among the tasks being undertaken by the Board for Congregational Services is the responsibility for district convention Res. 2-02, requesting creative approaches to promoting Lutheran schools.

The challenges facing congregations in Missouri are significant. We live in a culture that is hostile to the Gospel and to Christ’s Church. Yet we have a gracious God who provides for His Church through His blessed Word and Sacraments. The Lord also gifted His Church with a diversity of gifts witnessed in His saints. In John 17, our Lord bids His Church to remain “in the Word” and “in the world.” The Lord sanctifies us in the truth of His Word and then sends us out into the world with that Word. The Missouri District will continue to serve and encourage congregations to fulfill the Great Commission and to be “Faithful Witnesses.”

R. Lee Hagan, *President*

R34

Montana District

“There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). These words form the theme for the Montana District 2015–2018 triennium. They also articulate the scandal of exclusiveness that creates conflict with so many institutions of authority in our nation. As one Christian denomination after another falls to compromising the name of Jesus in favor of favor with these other names, we are reminded by these words that God sent His Son, Jesus, to be the salvation of the world. Only in His name, by faith in His name, are our sins forgiven and our lives restored to an everlasting life with Him in heaven. This is the Good News we are bound to proclaim to each other and to the world.

During the past triennium, the Montana District completed work on one mission start, Shepherd of the Valley, Thompson Falls, and began work on the next, Emmaus Lutheran Mission in Big Timber and Livingston. We also received new congregations: River of Life in Laurel and Living Water in Dillon. We are thankful to God that the name of Jesus continues to be proclaimed by the pastors of the district and that, by the grace of God, people are responding. Our goal for the next triennium is to stabilize Emmaus and begin work on our next mission start.

In accordance with 2013 Synod Res. 7-04A, the Montana District, during the previous triennium, evaluated its own viability by discussing and responding to the principles of viability on two separate occasions at Montana District Board of Directors meetings. In addition, the principles were sent to the presidents of each Montana District congregation for consideration, and the delegates from each congregation were asked to respond during the June 2015 Montana District convention. The results are as follows:

Does the district do the following:

1. Provide resources for the district president to carry out ecclesiastical supervision as defined in the Synod’s Constitution (Art. XII) and Bylaws (Bylaw 1.2.1 [g]) in a reasonable and timely manner?

Yes, and in fact, the leaders and congregations of the Montana District find the size of this district to be ideal on this count. The district president is able to perform his duties in accordance with these citations with a minimum of assistance. The Montana District employs a part-time assistant and part-time treasurer.

2. Provide resources for the district president in carrying out the minimum requirements for official visits to each of the member congregations as outlined in Bylaws 4.4.4ff., including coming to the pastors and member congregations at least once every three years as a brotherly adviser, “reminding them of the joy of serving in the mission and ministry of the church”?

Yes, and in fact, the leaders and congregations of the Montana District find the size of this district to be ideal on this count. The district president is able to visit congregations and pastors personally. Such visits are found to be beneficial to the health and growth of the district.

3. Provide appropriate guidance and support to member congregations for participating in the mission God has given to the Church, including how that is carried out in the various missions and ministries of the church?

Yes, and in fact, the leaders and congregations of the Montana District find the size of this district to be ideal on this count. The triennial visits of the district president are primarily encouragements to participate in the mission on the district and Synod level. In addition, the Montana District newsletter has the same goal.

4. Provide encouragement and needed congregational services (e.g., stewardship, conflict resolution, crisis counseling, financial counseling, calling process, collaborative efforts, networking, nourishment, and help with evangelistic outreach, etc.) to member congregations,

and provide advice and counsel to member congregations struggling to carry out their core functions? (Provide encouragement and support for Lutheran preschools, elementary and high schools? How many exist, have been started, etc.?)

Yes, and in fact, the leaders and congregations of the Montana District find the size of this district to be ideal on this count. Volunteer standing committees of the board of directors, comprised of lay and church workers, are appointed triennially. These committees assist congregations in the parish services as mentioned.

Montana District congregations support six Day Schools and eighteen preschools. The district has a “Schools Fund” from which annual grants are made to these schools. It sponsors an annual preschool conference and a biennial school administrator conference.

5. Adapt to new circumstances and meet changing needs related to the mission and ministry of the church?

Yes, and in fact, the leaders and congregations of the Montana District find the size of this district to be ideal on this count. Congregations in Montana are now looking for guidance as to how to weather the loss of oil and coal revenues. The district president and circuit visitors are sensitive to these needs and offer counsel to continue to proclaim the name of Jesus. The Montana District developed and supported the means for a triple parish to live-stream its services so that the pastor could serve all three congregations at the same time each Sunday.

6. Meet its financial responsibilities and obligations, and receive sufficient financial resources from its membership to (i) support the mission and ministry of the church in the district, and (ii) financially assist the mission and ministry of the Synod?

Yes, and in fact, the leaders and congregations of the Montana District find the size of this district to be ideal on this count. Montana District congregations have increased their contributions to the district each year for ten years. The Montana District forwards 25 percent of these offerings to the Synod. So, Montana District offerings to the Synod have increased over the last ten years.

7. Find itself to be of a size and configuration to be effective, efficient, and capable of serving all who make up its constituency?

Yes, and in fact, the leaders and congregations of the Montana District find the size of this district to be ideal on this count. The pastors and congregations of the Montana District evidence a strong commitment to each other and to the proclamation of the name of Jesus.

8. Provide adequate assistance and support to allow the district president to carry out the obligations of the office of district president as set forth in the Bylaws?

Yes, and in fact, the leaders and congregations of the Montana District find the size of this district to be ideal on this count. See questions 1 & 2.

Based on what you have determined above, discuss the “viability” of your district in light of these “general principles” and determine to what extent your district is capable of carrying out its purpose and functions.

The Montana District considers itself to meet and exceed the principles of viability as set forth in Res. 7-04A. It encourages the Synod to consider establishing maximum sizes for districts, (roughly 100 congregations) in order to assure the primary work of ecclesiastical supervision is carried out in a scriptural, personal, and caring manner.

Terry R. Forke, *President*

R35

Nebraska District

Congregations, leaders, and related organizations of the Nebraska District growing and working together in their mission of discipling the saved and proclaiming Christ to the lost.

The Lord has blessed the Nebraska District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for more than 130 years with congregations that preach the true Word of God and administer His Sacraments, as well as Lutheran schools that teach the truths of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. First and foremost, the Nebraska District is comprised of 245 congregations and all our commissioned and ordained workers. We operate 35 Lutheran elementary schools, four Lutheran high schools, and 34 preschools. These ministries and workers are the core of our effort to proclaim the Word and make His presence known.

We have been sent into the world as the incarnational presence of Jesus to convey His care and proclaim His Good News. The district’s board of directors continues to seek the Lord’s guidance to monitor a strategic plan for resourcing its congregations, schools, missions, and professional church workers in their mission to disciple the saved and reach out to those who are without Christ.

Under our Synod’s mission, we are focused on life together. Through Word and Sacraments, we seek to strengthen each individual in their connection with Christ, to fortify our union as the Body of Christ, and as His Body to serve and reach out to the world through mercy and witness.

The 2015 convention of the Nebraska District gathered under the theme “In the World ... Not of the World” based on John 17: “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”

God provides abundant opportunities to share His grace in the person and actions of Jesus Christ. Some of our communities are experiencing general population growth, as well as specific growing populations of Hispanic, African, and Asian immigrants. We have four ordained Sudanese-American LCMS pastors. We have two Sudanese congregations and two other Sudanese ministries within other congregations. In Nebraska, there are two established Hispanic congregations with called pastors and another Latino-ministry plant underway. The ongoing outreach to the Native American Winnebago Tribe continues through an association of congregations and the Nebraska District.

An evangelist with POBLO (People of the Book Lutheran Outreach) and a pastor who was born in Ethiopia both partner with Omaha congregations and also work at our Peace International Friendship Center in Omaha to reach out to the Muslim community in our midst, as well as to other immigrants and refugees, with the Good News of life and salvation in Christ alone. Campus ministries offer both national and international students the Good News of salvation in Jesus. Ministries at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Wayne State College, and the many higher-education institutions in Omaha are served by local congregations in partnership with the district. The district also supports a chapel at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln.

Camp Luther offers outdoor opportunities for growth in the Word and Christian fellowship and is the only Christian camp in Nebraska for developmentally disabled individuals.

The Nebraska District and Concordia University, Nebraska, continue a strong partnership in the Gospel, with district congregations and individuals moved by the Spirit to support the mission of CUNE as well as our LCMS seminaries at St. Louis, Missouri, and Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Nebraska District congregations and schools continue to be moved by the Holy Spirit to a strong commitment for personalized mission. We are encouraged both to being missionaries and sending missionaries in daily witness, mission servant events, and international mission fields. Nebraska District pastors who serve as military chaplains have been deployed to war zones and disaster sites. The Orphan Grain Train, based in Norfolk, Nebraska, continues its worldwide human-care ministry. We enjoy our partnership with Iowa District West to involve congregational members and church workers in personal mission, prayer, financial support, and servant events through the work of Mission Awareness Developer Gary Thies and Mission Central in Mapleton, Iowa.

The Nebraska District continues to work together with the Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to offer children services, behavioral health care, and immigration-resettlement services through Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska.

The four district vice-presidents and 23 circuit visitors assist the district president in regular visitation of our workers and congregations in order to encourage and strengthen outreach, witness, and service. The district also provides church-worker care to its ordained and commissioned professional church workers through a network of rostered, state-licensed mental health professionals.

The LCMS Foundation and Lutheran Church Extension Fund are special blessings in the Nebraska District, assisting congregations, laity, and church workers in funding and living out the Lord's mission. Christian stewardship involving all of life and life's resources continues to receive emphasis around the district. The district mission executive also has two teams of dedicated volunteers: one focused on planting new ministries and the other working on helping rural and small-town ministries see the harvest field all around them.

Our district continues to seek new ways to help train lay leaders and congregational members for special service in assisting their pastors, teachers, and directors of Christian education. We facilitate courses to those men who are preparing to enter into the Synod's Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program.

Our two LWML districts and the LLL continue to find ways to support ministry and outreach within and beyond our borders. The district continues in its desire to assist the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan/South Sudan (ELCS/SS) to emerge as a strong confessional Lutheran Church, although in the midst of the current civil unrest it is hard to see where this might take us in the near future.

At the end of November 2015, in compliance with 2013 Synod Res. 7-04A, the district board of directors and circuit visitors were surveyed to evaluate the Nebraska District's viability. Thirty-one responses were returned in early December and evaluated by the district president and vice-presidents, who submit the following report:

As of December 2015, the Nebraska District LCMS consists of 246 congregations and includes all but the panhandle of the state. The number and variety of congregations and the miles in between are both a challenge to and blessing and strength of the district in its work together. Those responding to the survey overwhelmingly support the size and work of the district as a group of congregations and the district staff that serves those congregations. We are challenged to gather the resources needed to support the mission efforts of the district and staff, but those challenges are engaged. District leadership is seen as adaptive and responsive to the needs of congregations, schools, and workers and to new mission challenges.

The greatest challenges are visitation, support, and ecclesial supervision. Beleaguered workers and conflicted congregations and schools challenge clear solutions. District staff, vice-presidents, and circuit visitors continue to engage those challenges, much as pastors face those challenges within their own congregations. In a sinful world, it is a constant pursuit, and fulfilling that task is seen positively on the whole and is well supported by our congregations. The overwhelming responses of those surveyed make clear the viability of the Nebraska District.

Our task is clear and our focus is on the future. As we live out life together, mercy, and witness, we focus on strengthening the faith of believers in their connection with Christ and, in Christ, growing in our connection with one another. We need to wrestle with our differences and find our common confession that in our deeds we might continue to show the compassion of our Lord and in our witness proclaim the truth, the way, and the life.

Richard Snow, *President*

R36

New England District

It is my privilege to be in my second term as President of the New England District. If you will indulge me, it is with all my heart before my Savior that I personally affirm New England to be the finest district in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Our pastors are wonderful gifts to the church, plus the numerous church workers, rostered and otherwise, are nothing but blessings to our part of Christ's harvest field. It is my privilege to serve in this role, and I pray with humility before our Lord that He makes me worthy of such a responsibility.

This report will outline the major wonders that the Lord has done among us in the last triennium. It will also include, as requested of all districts, our answer to the request to "evaluate the District through its officers, board of directors, and congregations" in terms of viability. Evaluations were given to every member of the New England District board of directors, every member of the staff of the district, the praesidium of the district, and other leaders and workers. These evaluations included standard questions regarding viability and were completed in January 2016. As president, I compiled the significant findings, which I will summarize in this report.

The Lord in the last triennium focused our ability to provide care for the church worker and the worker's family. The New England District extended a divine call to Deaconess Tiffany Manor, and she accepted. After evaluation during the last triennium, it was determined to seek to make this position, namely "Deaconess for Human Care," a full-time position and to budget resources accordingly. It was also, in January 2016, made a tenured call. Deaconess Manor has done a marvelous job of reaching out to our church workers and the families of the same, especially with a focus on pastors' wives. She has been readily accepted by the pastors and church workers. Her office is under my own supervision as district president, and we have regular reports; but the district has insured that confidentiality is always to be maintained in her work.

The Lord, in the last triennium, also focused our ability to provide care for the congregations. The New England District has now called a District Revitalizer, the Rev. Eric Sahlberg, who is a church planter and expert in church revitalization. He has traveled extensively throughout New England, engaging pastors and church leaders in the area of church revitalization. With New England sadly leading the way in the secularization of our society, with five of our six states in the top ten states for rejecting traditional Christian views and experiencing the decline of the church, this area is much needed and has received great support.

The district, in foreign missions, also continues to support ministry in Kenya and Liberia. It also supports local human-care ministries, including a successful "Hands of Grace" outreach to northwest Connecticut out of one of our district congregations. Other congregations engage in similar ministries.

As a rule, the New England District—perhaps because we are indeed an outpost of the Synod in the northeast corner of the United States, and with many of our congregations living with a "mission/outpost" mentality—New England District is remarkably free of

conflict and is a hallmark district of collegiality, Christian peace, and unity. I have been blessed as district president with relatively lesser work demanded in the area of doctrinal correction or conflict. Most of my work has been to help struggling congregations meet financial needs and to maintain ministry in our post-Christian environment here in New England.

I conclude with a summary of the findings of our viability study in the district. For the sake of space, I will not repeat the questions asked of those who took surveys and joined in the viability study with responses and comments.

All “strongly agree” or “agree” that as district president I have sufficient resources to carry out ecclesiastical supervision. Likewise is there strong agreement that I have the resources to carry out official visits as we follow the Synod’s encouragement to engage in regular and true visitation. Again, strong agreement exists that all congregations have a genuine opportunity to engage in the missions and ministries of the district. Almost to a person, there was incredible agreement that guidance and encouragement exist for congregations in the areas of stewardship, financial counseling, the calling process, and support for our schools and early childhood centers. Any number of answers cited the evidence of the work of Deaconess Manor and the revitalization efforts of Rev. Sahlberg in support of this area.

Because we live in one of the most rapidly changing environments for mission and ministry, with a growing antipathy and even hostility to Christianity, most respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we are doing our best to meet changing needs. One area had some concern, in that the financial resources coming to the district from congregations have, as in many areas, become harder and harder to determine ahead of time. We have made budget cuts to become “leaner and meaner” but also stronger in our way of doing ministry. Concerns exist that we have had to use estate gifts and endowments to do some ministry of the district, but we are grateful to the Lord that He has provided a healthy reserve of financial resources for us at this time. Most respondents expressed a concern that we deal with the issues facing us in these matters now rather than wait for it to become a crisis of epic proportions years down the line.

As to the size of the district, all respondents to a person agreed that they like the smaller size of the New England District compared to larger districts of the Synod elsewhere. They feel that this allows the district president especially to be present in so many congregational events, positive and negative, on a personal and regular basis. Some responses even suggested that districts the size of New England should be looked on as the definitive size for proper visitation, ecclesiastical supervision, and instilling unity and collegiality among the member congregations and church workers. Though we readily recognize the programs and staffing that a large district can provide to her members the respondents held up the advantages just outlined as a major blessing in our district.

As such, the overwhelming conclusions drawn from the evaluations submitted by the varying respondents were positive toward our district’s viability. Even the caution that the district cannot forever count on some endowments to fund the mission—even in that area—there was a strong positive response to the Lord’s blessing of New England. With such a foundation of blessing it is my hope and the hope of all New Englanders that the light will continue to shine and shine in a greater way. Numbers are not everything, but we do want our numbers to increase as the Lord provides and allows. But we want it to increase for His glory and for the salvation of those for whom Jesus was born, lived, died, rose again, and reigns on high.

Timothy Yeadon, *President*

R37

New Jersey District

The 2015 New Jersey population was estimated to be 8,872,593 people, residing in 21 counties and 566 municipalities; with the following population distributions:

<u>Generation</u> (median age = 39.4)		population	percentage
Homeland (Z)	2005–2025	1,104,163	12.44%
Millennial (Y)	1982–2004	2,589,637	29.19%
Gen X (13th)	1961–1981	2,542,445	28.66%
Boomer	1946–1960	1,606,461	18.11%
Silent	1925–1945	888,259	10.01%
GI	1901–1924	141,627	1.60%

Racial/Ethnic

Asian		735,061	8.28%
Asian Indian	299,034		
Chinese	126,659		
Filipino	112,385		
Korean	95,325		
Black/African American		1,130,379	12.74%
White		5,255,539	59.23%
Hispanic/Latino		1,573,098	17.73%
Puerto Rican	437,977		
Mexican	219,073		
Cuban	84,946		
Pac Is/Am Indian		178,516	2.01%

As one surveys the religious landscape regarding those who reside in New Jersey, the population can be placed within these religious categories and preferences:

	2014	2004
Catholic & Orthodox	34.0%	39.2%
Catholic	33.5%	
Orthodox	0.5%	
Historic Mainline Protestant	16.8%	18.8%
Baptist	5.0%	
Congregational	1.5%	
Episcopalian/Anglican	1.9%	
Lutheran	2.6%	3.1%
Methodist	3.4%	
Presbyterian/Reformed	2.3%	
Other Protestant Denominations	6.7%	5.8%
Other Non-Christian Religious	10.9%	11.4%
None/No Preference or Spiritual	31.2%	24.4%

The State of the New Jersey District—LCMS

The New Jersey District comprises fifty-four congregations, with 12,096 baptized members and 9,862 communicant members, and an average Sunday worship attendance of around 4,075. Eleven congregations operate a preschool ministry; five congregations operate a preschool-kindergarten ministry; three congregations operate a preschool through second grade ministry; and one congregation operates a preschool through eighth grade ministry. As a Lutheran presence, we are almost invisible in a state that numbers nearly 9,000,000 residents (one out of every 750 residents is an LCMS member).

We continue to see that many of our congregations are growing smaller in terms of both baptized and communicant membership; and that the average age of those who worship are getting older. At present, of the fifty-four New Jersey District congregations, *eight* are close to closing their doors, since their average worship attendance is below

twenty now, and another *twelve to fifteen* congregations worship fewer than fifty members on an average Sunday morning.

The crisis situation in which we find ourselves is this: we no longer live in a church culture but in an un-churched and de-churched culture. This state of affairs both challenges and invites God's people to acquire and possess a proper ministry balance between *edification* and *evangelism*; and most important, to *become more missionary* in our posture and orientation toward those who are not Christians.

What Is Our Reflective Response to This Present Reality?

From the very beginning of time and human history, God's fundamental mission is to save humankind; for God desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of their salvation in Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:4). So that His mission might be accomplished in the lives of all peoples, God has entrusted His people with *four ministries*.

- + **An evangelistic ministry**, as they seek to *evangelize* large numbers of non-Christians through their life of witness and Gospel proclamation and bring them, by God's grace, to faith in Jesus Christ
- + **A maturational ministry**, as they grow up into Christ, who is the Head of the body, and become *mature disciples* of Jesus, who are also His stewards, servants, priests, witnesses, salt, light, and living letters
- + **An organic ministry**, as they are connected to one another in relationships that live out the "*one another*" *admonitions* of the New Testament, with each believer using his or her gifts for the building up of the Body and for the common good
- + **An incarnational ministry**, so that wherever they go, and to whomever they come into contact with, they are able to be *His ambassadors* and *living letters*, making known His mind and word and demonstrating His *love, concern* and *compassion* for others;

The following statements describe core, strategic focuses that will guide the members of the New Jersey District during the next triennium as we seek to fulfill the Lord's Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20; Luke 24:46–49) and Great Commandment (Matthew 25:31–45; Luke 10:25–37; John 13:34–35; 1 John 4:7–12, 19–21).

Ten Strategic Focuses

- Focus 1: A district-wide process that addresses the pressing issues and adaptive challenges that are facing New Jersey District professional church workers and congregations
- Focus 2: Connecting and networking with one another through a biannual *Day with the Congregational Presidents* and monthly *Learning Communities*, as we form and equip ourselves for ministry in the 21st century
- Focus 3: Identifying pastors for potential ministry service in New Jersey congregations; they will be the next generation of pastoral leaders to shape the district's ministry culture and lead it into the future
- Focus 4: Strengthening New Jersey District congregations through equipping resources and events that are based upon their needs, along with the onsite or online ministry of specialized district staff; and the ministry curriculum of the *New Jersey District Leaders and Learners* program
- Focus 5: Extending His kingdom through the formation of lay and pastoral missionaries, utilizing this thirty-six session curriculum
 - + *The Mission of God*
 - + *Discipleship in the New Testament*
 - + *"Body Life" as the Body of Christ, with Christ Being the Head*
 - + *Biblical Anthropology and Culture Learning*
 - + *Worldviews*
 - + *Fostering Revitalization and Mission Movements*

- Focus 6: The formation of urban church workers for labor in densely urban congregational and mission contexts
- Focus 7: To design and establish a "restart" model for densely urban congregational ministry
- Focus 8: Exploring and embracing the counsel and practices of our ascended Lord, made known through His special servants, given to equip His people for their work of ministry, the ministry of the Word (Ephesians 4:11–16)
- Focus 9: Developing a process to interface with, and minister to, "at-risk" congregations so that they might experience a new chapter of ministry
- Focus 10: Exploring creative and innovative ways of ministry configurations at the congregational and circuit levels through strategic partnerships

District Viability Questions—the New Jersey District

+ Ecclesiastical Supervision

The New Jersey District LCMS provides resources for the district president to carry out ecclesiastical supervision as defined in the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws in a reasonable and timely manner.

agree/strongly agree	82.22%
no opinion	17.78%
disagree/strongly disagree	00.00%

+ Official Visits

The New Jersey District LCMS provides resources for the district president to carry out the minimum requirements for official visits to each of the member congregations as outlined in the Bylaws of Synod, including coming to the pastors and member congregations at least once every three years as a brotherly adviser, "reminding them of the joy of serving in the mission and ministry of the church."

agree/strongly agree	86.67%
no opinion	13.33%
disagree/strongly disagree	00.00%

+ Guidance and Support for Member Congregations

The New Jersey District LCMS provides appropriate guidance and support to member congregations for participating in the mission God has given to the church, including how that is carried out in the various missions and ministries of the church.

agree/strongly agree	80.00%
no opinion	08.89%
disagree/strongly disagree	11.11%

+ Congregational Services, Advice, and Counsel

The New Jersey District LCMS provides encouragement and needed congregational services to member congregations and provides advice and counsel to member congregations struggling to carry out their core functions.

agree/strongly agree	75.56%
no opinion	17.78%
disagree/strongly disagree	06.66%

+ Changing Needs and Circumstances

The New Jersey District LCMS adapts to new circumstances and meets changing needs related to the mission and ministry of the church.

agree/strongly agree	73.33%
no opinion	17.78%
disagree/strongly disagree	08.89%

+ Financial Responsibilities

The New Jersey District LCMS meets its financial responsibilities and obligations, and receives sufficient financial resources from

its members to (1) support the mission and ministry of the church in the district and (2) financially assist the mission and ministry of the Synod.

agree/strongly agree	37.78%
no opinion	48.89%
disagree/strongly disagree	13.33%

+ Size and Configuration

The New Jersey District LCMS finds itself to be of a size and configuration to be effective, efficient, and capable of serving all who make up its constituency.

agree/strongly agree	73.33%
no opinion	17.78%
disagree/strongly disagree	08.89%

+ Assistance and Support for the District President

The New Jersey District LCMS provides adequate assistance and support to allow the district president to carry out the functions and obligations of the office of the district president as set forth in the bylaws.

agree/strongly agree	75.56%
no opinion	24.44%
disagree/strongly disagree	00.00%

Theses on the Ministry of the Church—the Ministry of the Word

In order that His Word, both Law and Gospel, might have free course and be proclaimed and taught for the edifying of His people and the evangelization of those who have built their lives upon non-Christian beliefs and narratives, His people have been entrusted with *the ministry of the Word*. These five theses on *the ministry of the church* will both inform and guide the members of the New Jersey District during the next triennium:

1. The ministry of the *Gospel, the spoken Word* is the highest office in the church, and from it flow all other offices in the church—both *the office of the pastoral ministry* and *the office of the priesthood of all believers* possess, and are called to proclaim, tell, and witness the Gospel through the spoken Word (Deuteronomy 6:4–7; Romans 10:9–17).
2. So that *all of His people* might be *properly and completely equipped* for their ministry of the Word, the ascended Christ gave five “Word gifts” (Ephesians 4:11–16) to His disciples so that His Word might accomplish His purposes through their *evangelizing, edifying and missionary* labors and messages (Deuteronomy 6:4–7; 8:3; Isaiah 55:11; Romans 10:9–17; 1 Corinthians 9:19–23).
3. The nature of the church is inseparable from the ministry of the church; consequently, a *Christian’s identity and ministry* is to be understood in light of *who I am in Christ* (disciple, servant, steward, priest, witness, temple of the Holy Spirit, etc.) and *who we are in Christ* (the Body of Christ, living stones built into a spiritual house, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, saints, ambassadors, living letters, etc.).
4. The ministry of the church is *to make disciples of all nations*—every ministry of the church makes sense, and has a purpose, only as it leads to this mission.
- #5: God is working out His saving plan in and through His chosen and redeemed people and *each disciple* has a responsibility for advancing the saving purposes of God in the world—so that this Gospel might be made known, it is His will that every disciple become a *wise scribe* who is able to help his or her neighbor make sense of his or her story in light of His story—through their communication and application of *soteriological and hermeneutical wisdom* (Matthew 13:11, 16–17, 51–52; 2 Timothy 3:14–17).

As with the Christians in the first century, we have this good work that is ours in Christ Jesus, and He is the One working through us to accomplish His saving intentions toward all people. Therefore, we can

rejoice in this “partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that He who began a work in you will carry it to completion until the Day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:3–6).

Respectfully Submitted,

Anthony Steinbronn, *President*

R38

North Dakota District

The North Dakota District consists of 87 congregations, 66 pastors, 2 Lutheran elementary schools, and 5 early childhood centers. While these numbers are smaller compared to most other districts, the North Dakota District consists of 71,000 square miles.

The North Dakota District’s triennial theme is “Lutheran for this Moment.” During this triennium, we are giving particular attention in celebrating our Lutheran DNA as being Christological, Confessional, Sacramental, Scriptural, Homiletical, Liturgical, Synodical, and Missional. The North Dakota District is intent on remaining faithful to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.

At its January 2015 convention, the North Dakota District resolved the following outcomes:

Witness—(1) Our first outcome in Witness is to *Plant and Revitalize Congregations*. Our goal is to start two new congregations in this triennium. We called a pastor in the spring of 2016 to start the first of the two. (2) Our second outcome is *Lutheran Education*. In this outcome, we are resolved to support Lutheran education in our churches, homes, and schools. One such way is to set 2017 as the Year of Lutheran Education on all levels, including home, church, school, and support of continuing education for our pastors and church workers.

Mercy—(1) Under *International Mercy Care*, the North Dakota district partners with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya and the Confessional Lutheran Church in Chile. We are involved in building and supporting a boarding school in Lenkishon, Kenya, contributing toward a pastor’s salary in Chile, and giving tuition assistance to a Chilean student attending the Lutheran seminary in Argentina. (2) Under *Local Mercy Care*, the district is involved in disaster preparedness and response, and being ready to provide disaster relief when needed.

Life Together—(1) In our Life Together, the district is committed to support, encourage, and provide opportunities for professional growth and the personal welfare of our *Ordained and Commissioned Ministers*. This is done through pastors conferences, theological conferences, and many opportunities for continued education. We are also preparing to celebrate Reformation 2017 with Dr. Lawrence Rast as presenter. (2) *Youth and Young Adults* is often event driven, which includes district LYF, an annual middle school gathering, the Synod National Youth Gathering and Higher Things events. (3) *Stewardship* involves the ongoing education and the sharing of resources.

In addition to the above, the North Dakota District continues to support a part-time campus ministry at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. It also funds a full-time Lutheran schoolteacher in mercy care at the Life Skills and Transitional Learning Center in Grafton. Caring for our pastors is also a high priority, as we are able to fund Doxology spiritual care and counsel for our pastors, largely due to a generous district LWML grant. To continue the district’s work in the future, the North Dakota District also appreciates the work of a part-time planned giving worker. In addition, the North Dakota District contributes toward the education of two EIIT Sudanese men training for the pastoral ministry and also gives generous education grants to men and women training for full-time church work. These education grants are also largely supported by our district’s LWML.

The North Dakota District has proven herself to be sustainable in the past and is confident of being so in the future. Congregational giving continues to increase each year and 34 percent of congregational giving is remitted to Synod in our Life Together. The North Dakota District continues to operate in the black under a balanced budget. Most of all, the North Dakota District believes that it is the Holy Spirit who creates and *sustains* faith. This is done through the faithful teaching and preaching of the Word of God and the distribution of our Lord's blessed Sacraments through faithful pastoral care. As the Word is preached and the Sacraments are administered, the North Dakota continues to be most sustainable.

The North Dakota District is blessed to have extremely faithful pastors and congregations who rejoice in being Lutheran for this Moment. Though our pastors and congregations are familiar with living under the cross of Jesus Christ, their faith and life is a daily confession of "fixing their eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of their faith" (Hebrews 12). *Soli Deo Gloria*.

James A. Baneck, *President*

R39

North Wisconsin District

The North Wisconsin District (NWD) is comprised of 216 congregations, including one Hmong congregation, in the northern half of Wisconsin and 11 counties in the western half of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The baptized membership is a little over 95,000, spread over 19 circuits. We are blessed to have 22 schools and 48 early childhood centers.

In June of this year, our district will be 100 years old. The North Wisconsin District was formed on July 7, 1916, when the Wisconsin District was split at the district convention in Milwaukee. The district began with 100 pastors and 22 teachers. At the time of the division, Hermann Daib, pastor at St. John Lutheran Church in Merrill, was president of the Wisconsin District. He had been elected at the 1906 convention. He later became the second NWD president in 1918 and served until 1936, and also served as the mission counselor for the district.

For 100 years, the congregations of our district have faithfully built on the rock of Jesus Christ by administering the Word and Sacraments. God's people, Sunday after Sunday, have repented of their sin and heard the good news they have been forgiven through the blood of Jesus, confessed their faith in the Lord and Savior, and rejoiced to call themselves the sons and daughters of the King of kings and Lord of lords. For 100 years, we have been blessed because of our good and gracious Lord. The theme of our district convention was "He's By Our Side" from Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress." Ohio District President Rev. Terry Cripe was our convention essayist. Our Lord has certainly been by our side during these first 100 years.

The focus of our district work has revolved around three outcomes proposed by the district board of directors:

- Congregations are equipped and engaged in the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Empowered by the Holy Spirit, NWD pastors and other professional church workers are motivated to grow disciples in Jesus Christ.
- Missions and outreach ministries are fully utilized to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

These outcomes have been developed to reflect our Mission Statement: ***Encourage, network, and equip Lutheran congregations of the North Wisconsin District LCMS to vigorously make known the love of Christ.***

To encourage our church workers, a district pastor (former counselor) provides confidential counseling to church workers. Another district pastor visits with congregation leaders and urges them to

encourage their workers and deal with their health issues. To encourage our DCEs (directors of Christian education), we have a retired DCE going around and meeting with them individually.

Every January, we have Leadership Meetings. The goal is to be in every circuit every three years to share resources and ideas, and to network our congregations to help our lay leaders carry out their ministry. This year, our topics included "Protect Yourself: Critical Policy for Current Legal Issues," "Stewardship," "How are you? Measuring the Health and Wellness of Our Church Workers and Leaders," and "Understanding Conflict." President Lueck shared the overall outlook of ministry in NWD and words of encouragement to those in attendance.

During the past triennium, we held three joint circuit visitor meetings with the South Wisconsin District. One theme was "God's Gift of Marriage" by Rev. Tom Eckstein. The other two were led by Ted Kober of Ambassadors of Reconciliation, with the first one focusing on reconciliation training and the second one a Bible study entitled "'Go and Be Reconciled' What does this mean?"

In the area of missions, the district continued to support three Hmong ministries in Green Bay, Appleton, and Eau Claire, and is looking to start a new ministry in Wausau. There is one full-time campus ministry at Stevens Point, one chaplain serving the veterans at Wisconsin Veterans Home in King, and a deaf ministry at various locations throughout the district under the direction of Pastor William Knaack, who retired at the end of 2015 but will continue to serve on a part-time basis.

For the past couple of years, the district has supported the LCMS mission work in Lima, Peru. Presently, there are five mission sites. In 2015, this ministry was supported through the "Hearts for Jesus" effort. Rev. Mark Eisold and Deaconess Caitlin Worden have visited the district to share with congregations and schools the ministry taking place in Peru. Hopefully we will have the first mission team from our district going this summer.

For the past two years, we have offered a total of \$20,000 in mini mission grants to congregations. In 2015, all the funds were spent, as 17 congregations used the money to support various outreach efforts.

Camp Luther continues to thrive in the northwoods, with around 400 children attending during the summer, along with the various offerings throughout the year. Camp Luther is currently running a campaign called "Filled with the Spirit," with the majority of the funds going to build a new dining hall.

Dr. Paul Maier has been an annual seminar leader every fall to approximately 300 in attendance. His presentations dealt with the apostle Paul, Martin Luther and the Reformation, and Islam and Christianity.

The challenges that our congregations, workers, and leaders face are not new, but we continue to address them as staff and board:

- Get the people into the Word to see what God's Word has to say.
- Presently, many of our congregations are getting smaller and older and are having a tough time dealing with the affordability of a worker and benefits.
- Matching of pastors' God-given gifts with the congregation needs.
- Congregations developing ministry plans that are in alignment with the needs of its members and community.
- Engaging the lay members of the congregation in ministry.
- Reduce and deal with conflict. Understand and live reconciliation.
- Recruit and support future church workers.
- Encourage our church workers

Our district continues to be served faithfully by district staff. Dennis Johnson continues to serve as the LCEF director. Mr. D. J. Schult joined the staff in 2013 as our school executive, along with helping direct our communications and mission trips.

Finally, in compliance with 2013 Res. 7-04A, “General Principles for Judging the Viability of a District,” at our 2015 district convention, we asked our delegates to respond to the statements or questions that were provided by Synod to show whether the North Wisconsin District is viable. These same questions were also given to our district board of directors and the district presidium.

Rev. Dr. Timothy Roser, first vice-president, was given the task to present these questions to the convention and gather their feedback concerning the district’s viability. Using electronic voting to register their answers to the eight questions, Dr. Roser summarized the findings with these words: *“In summary, in answer to Synod’s question, yes, the North Wisconsin District does believe it functions well and should continue to do so as an independent district of the LCMS. That being said, it should also be noted that no new structures or possibilities of district design were offered as alternatives. Without such a choice, it is natural to support the status quo. Perhaps the next step to consider is to answer the question: ‘Is there another way we could do districts?’”*

The overwhelming response of the delegates was that the NWD is a viable LCMS district of 216 congregations that have been working together as a district for 100 years and will continue to move forward in the next 100 years. God has blessed us in the past and will continue to do so into the future. He’s by our side!

Dwayne M. Lueck, *President*

R40

Northern Illinois District

We continue to remind each other in the Northern Illinois District (NID) that the district is not the district office or staff or board of directors, but rather the district is the girls and boys, men and women, believers in Jesus in 220 congregations, missions, and multi-sites. So the district is not “them”; it’s “us.”

We concentrate all things on two critical targets: pure doctrine and vigorous mission outreach in every congregation. Everything considered for action is measured on the basis of these targets. Another way to say this is that we work together for two main purposes. One is the “ecclesiastical stuff”—working and praying with each other in guarding our life and doctrine, in seeking new pastors and other rostered church workers, in seeking godly resolutions to conflicts and in other issues. The second is to help each other to carry out the Lord’s mission in our own communities and, through the national Synod and through short-term missions, internationally to the ends of the earth.

The local mission we call “*New Starts ... New Believers*.” Every congregation can always find at least one new way to reach out to its own community with the love of Jesus. We go out into our communities to be His hands and feet, and then, when people ask, we are His voice, connecting them with the Word and Sacraments in our congregations. We do the new starts and we pray for the Holy Spirit to multiply new believers.

A new start can be large or small—from as big as planting a new congregation to as small as distributing diapers and other baby items to families in need and anything in between. We have a growing number of congregations doing new starts of all sizes, and we continually pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His harvest and for the Holy Spirit to add to our number day by day those who are being saved.

Many of our new starts are with our Latino neighbors. Iglesia Luterana San Pablo in Aurora has raised up and sent out six new Hispanic LCMS pastors in the last few years with more in the pipeline. This started slowly and has grown into what is now San Pablo’s *Escuela Misionera*/Missionary School. We have an excellent

partnership with the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Seminary. The district is currently carrying out a support campaign called *¡Enviando!*, Spanish for “Sending!”

Lutheran Urban Kingdom Expansion/LUKE has resulted in six pastors and one deaconess being called to four congregations in the city of Chicago, two of which have Lutheran schools. These four congregations all are willing to make significant changes in order to reach their neighborhoods with the pure Gospel. This was made possible by a large offering from a donor family.

Our three mission facilitators have developed several Learning Communities, clusters of four or five congregations with Lutheran schools or preschools, learning to use their Lutheran schools not simply as a ministry for members (as good as that is) or as a revenue stream, but actually to use the school intentionally as an outreach to unchurched people. Both the pastor and the principal/administrator must agree to participate fully in order to be part of a Learning Community.

The NID has also been an active participant in the Synod’s Koinonia Project; currently there are three groups of about ten pastors each. We have found that we truly do learn from each other and that we express our doctrine and carry out our biblically based practices better when we sit down together for prayer and study of the Scriptures and the Confessions.

District President Dan Gilbert is in his fourth term and will not be eligible to serve another term, so we are praying and talking with each other about who the new district president will be in 2018.

Finally, in keeping with 2013 Res. 7-04A, the NID conducted a survey of rostered and lay leaders within the district, including all members of the district board of directors. A total of 101 people responded to the survey. Ten questions were asked, and those ten can be summed up well with the last question on the survey: “Based on general principles in the questions above, I personally consider the Northern Illinois District capable of carrying out its purpose and functions.” Here are the responses: Strongly Agree, 26%; Agree, 49%; Don’t Know, 10%; Disagree, 14%; Strongly Disagree, 1%. Based on these responses, the NID leadership gives thanks to God that in spite of challenges, our work together as a district in guarding our life and doctrine and in carrying out the Lord’s mission continues to be viable.

Dan P. Gilbert, *President*

R41

Northwest District

The Northwest District is comprised of the ministries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the states of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Church of All Nations Lutheran Church in Hong Kong is also a member of the NOW District. During the past triennium, the English District has established a congregation in Moses Lake, Washington.

Approximately 20 years ago, the NOW District board of directors adopted the Policy-Based Model of Governance as its way of doing business. During this time, formal annual reviews of the performance of the district president and the district’s ministry have been conducted, and copies of the report have been shared with the Synod President’s office.

The staff of the NOW District has determined that leadership development is the target and focus of the work we do in caring for and supporting the ministries within our borders. Leadership development builds on the congregationally based polity that forms a core value of the Synod (see LCMS Constitution Art. VII). It also provides the opportunity for greater flexibility within the diverse communities in which our ministries are located and allows the Body of Christ in a location to respond creatively and personally to those people God has

given them to love. It is the purpose and intent of the NOW District staff to encourage and resource the professional church workers and lay leaders whom we serve to live the disciple's life.

In compliance with Resolution 7-04A, approved at the 2013 LCMS Convention, we offer the following report:

1. Our district does indeed provide adequate resources for ecclesiastical supervision in a reasonable and timely manner as prescribed by the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws. This supervision has been carried out faithfully over the years.
2. Official visits are carried out under the direction and delegation of the district president. Circuit visitors and district vice-presidents are often asked to carry out the task. The opportunity for regular communication and reporting of these visits has been provided for.
3. Guidance and support for ministries of the district are provided for through the district's executive staff. In the past triennium, three new executive staff members have been added: Robin Fossum as Director of Early Childhood Ministry, Bob Fossum as Director of Family Ministry, and Jim Scriven as Director of Education Services. Along with Dustin Kunkel, Executive Assistant to the President, and Marilyn Allen, NOW District Business Manager, they serve as the primary resources to the ministries of the district. Leadership Development has emerged as the primary focus of the district staff's activities. One-on-one coaching and encouragement are provided to the professional church workers of the district and other ministry leaders through the DCE Leadership Initiative, the Sustainable Lutheran Schools Initiative, and the mentoring of Early Childhood Ministry leaders. The district has also established a collaborative effort with the CNH and PSW districts to assist pastors who are new to ministry (seminary graduates) to make the shift from being a student toward being a practitioner through the M(inistry) A(pplied) P(ractice)—West Coast Program. This is a two-year effort that combines a regional meeting with personal mentoring and cohort meetings. The district is also sponsoring a learning cohort in partnership with the Pastoral Leadership Institute and in collaboration with the CNH and PSW districts to train a group of pastors and lay leaders in connecting with their communities. In addition, the district staff has produced numerous resources for congregations dealing with congregational life-cycle issues (Legacy Toolkit) and for assisting congregations in connecting with their communities (Essential Participants Toolkit.) These resources are made available through the NOW District website. Consultation and direct encouragement are regularly provided by all the members of the district staff. An important partner in the district's work is Concordia University—Portland's Center for Applied Lutheran Leadership (CALL). CALL operates Mission Training Center (MTC), which provides leadership training for professional and lay leaders throughout the Synod. MTC is the primary arm for training the licensed lay deacons of the NOW District. MTC also provides training and the opportunity for dialogue around important church issues such as declining congregations and ministry planning. The district staff and its partners seek to make the best use of technology in connecting across the distances we face while at the same time recognizing the value of face-to-face contact in a timely and strategic manner. The NOW District has also established a Catalyst Grant effort designed to help start new ministry in the district. In a partnership with the Center for Prayer and Renewal, we are encouraging growth in the prayer life of the people and ministries of the district.
4. Encouragement and needed congregational services are provided through those efforts mentioned above and through personal visitation by district staff. The district also maintains a partnership in a collaborative venture – Consultation to Clergy – through which psychological services are offered to professional church workers and consultation is made available to assist congregations dealing with conflict. The district website offers the opportunity for leaders in the church to connect with one another directly and to share their stories of ministry with one another.
5. The NOW District holds strongly to the value of the LCMS Constitution that gives the local congregation the opportunity to discern and carry out its ministry where God has placed it. Because the NOW District is a diverse collection of rural, urban, suburban, and

frontier contexts, it is essential that we seek to provide support, encouragement, and guidance while empowering the local ministry to reflect the love of God in Jesus Christ to those in its midst. We seek to assist local ministries in discerning what God has called them to do and to be and then to help them accomplish this vision. This value is reflected in the Ends Policies established by the district board of directors in April 2013. They are as follows:

- 1.0 *The Northwest District exists so that congregations and church workers live fully as committed followers of Jesus to reach the lost, disciple the saved, and be essential participants and witnesses in their communities. Matthew 28:19–20; Matthew 5:13; Ephesians 1:9–10*

LIFE TOGETHER

- 1.01 *Congregations actively provide Word and Sacrament ministry in every corner of the district.*

WITNESS

- 1.02 *Congregations intentionally engage the people in their communities and surrounding areas. This vision includes:*
 - *Lay and church workers serve together as full partners in ministry within the congregation and communities.*
 - *Congregations are encouraged to develop and implement strategic bridges into their communities.*
 - *Congregations freely disseminate and share resources and ministry ideas with sister congregations.*

MERCY

- 1.03 *Congregations boldly work with congregations of various Christian bodies to:*
 - *Provide needed services to communities.*
 - *Share God's love, comfort and grace through Jesus.*
 - *Share resources which may grow Christ's church.*
6. The district has been able to meet its financial obligations through the blessing of God. The board of directors has chosen to support the ministry of the Synod by sending on 10 percent of the receipts we receive from our congregations. We ask the congregations of the district to do the same as they discern the level of support they remit to the support the missions of the district.
7. While there is no perfect system or arrangement in the broken world in which we live, the NOW District is able to effectively care for and support the congregations and workers within its boundaries.
8. There is adequate support for the NOW District president to carry out his duties as prescribed in the Bylaws of the Synod.

The NOW District is seeking to increase awareness of the support it can provide to its constituents through the production and distribution of an annual report. Our 2015 report is available on the NOW District website (nowlcms.org).

Paul A. Linnemann, *President*

R42

Ohio District

"A Time to Plant" was the theme of the 2015 Ohio District Convention, held on the campus of Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Michigan. The past triennium demonstrated why it is indeed a time for us to plant new ministries and new missions.

Healthy Congregations

During the previous triennium, one objective was to prepare a number of congregations to become planters. The aim was to strengthen healthy congregations so they could plant daughter congregations, begin satellite congregations, or start new ministries in their own communities in order to reach new people. So a number of congregations participated in the Transforming Congregations process. In some cases, those congregations have been strengthened so that they could plant a new entity or satellite ministry. Others underwent the process with less success. Recently, one of our pastors observed that what made the process work in his congregation was that the

members were committed to working together. Where that cooperation existed, change in governance style did not affect their work. Unfortunately, that was not so in other congregations, sometimes because the congregation was willing to undergo the process but only because the pastor wanted to do it. The members were not wholeheartedly behind it. Nevertheless, we do have a number of congregations who are able to plant something new in a neighboring community. We also have seen more congregations attempting to become involved in their communities, and that is commendable. Whether a congregation has 400 or 40 in worship, there are opportunities for them to impact their neighborhoods and communities. Were their communities to be asked, “Has _____ Lutheran Church made an impact on this town,” they would be able to answer positively.

During this triennium, I have visited congregations mostly in two ways: (1) “official” three-hour visits with congregational leadership on Saturday mornings, and (2) congregational visits as a worshiper and Bible class attendee. In those visits, I hear many sermons *about* the Gospel, that Jesus died for sins, that those who believe in him will receive eternal life. But I still don’t hear enough sermons where the Gospel is proclaimed *to* me. Sometimes newscasters report a change in the tax code without telling the viewer what that means for those in the affected income groups. The Gospel I hear frequently is like that; what is often missing is what that means to me as one who stands convicted by my own sin, what it means to me who wants to continue to try to get on God’s good side by trying to be a better parent, better spouse, better worker, or better employer. We need to hear words that will move us to repent of our sins, confess our faith, and rejoice in the blessings of forgiveness and new life in Christ, as the 2016 Synodical convention theme suggests.

As for Sunday morning Bible study, in many congregations attendance is healthy. The people are taught well and there is genuine interaction among them. In other congregations, attendance is 10 percent or less of those who are in worship. A bothersome part of this is the use of materials not from our own publishing house. The trouble lies not with the congregation in all cases. Some of our publishing house’s materials are not well-written. They are doctrinally correct, but they do not engage the participant. And since most of our pastors have had only one course in teaching, they are not always able to teach in ways that engage the mind. A district convention overture encouraged our pastors to find an outstanding parochial school teacher and invite that teacher to monitor his teaching to see how it might be improved upon. “Teaching the Faith” was the topic at our Spring 2016 pastors’ conference. What a blessing it would be if more of our members could say with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as He opened to us the Scriptures?”

Healthy Professional Church Workers

Now that the economy has picked up, we have seen an uptick in retirements. Will this mean that we need more pastors? While I have never had as many vacancies as I have had since the latter part of 2014 (13–20), we are not yet in the predicted shortage of pastors. Why? Because congregations continue to close or work with only part-time workers, thus lessening the demand.

The threats to healthy professional church workers remain. The average salary for a pastor in our district is about \$62,600, including housing. That is a bit higher than the average in the Indiana and Eastern districts; lower than for Michigan and Northern Illinois. Many pastors still graduate with considerable debt, and health-care costs continue to escalate. The Synod in convention encourages pastors to work on continuing education, but the financial cost is either to be carried by the worker or the congregation, and many pastors and congregations simply cannot afford it. As for our commissioned workers, salaries for female teachers averages \$38,600, and for male teachers it is \$49,600.

I thank God that the number of professional church worker misbehavior incidents remains low, as do the number of congregations in conflict with their pastor. Your staff is prepared to help with reconciliation where requested.

Healthy Relationships

A number of congregations have joined together informally to share resources. Regional youth activities allow local youth groups to do things they otherwise could not do. I have continued to explore with the Indiana and Michigan district presidents ways that we could collaborate and share resources in an attempt to keep all of our operating costs in check. We continue to use and share Intentional Interim pastors on a synodwide basis. Our financial contributions to the Synod remains at 21 percent.

Our Future Viability

At our convention, delegates discussed by region the future viability of the Ohio District. The board of directors has also held viability discussions. Each region sent a summary, which I have compiled here.

Changing demographics affect us all. Aging congregations find themselves unable to afford full-time pastors or maintain their buildings. The multitude of Sunday morning options has changed attendance frequencies. It is a challenge to attract and keep 18–35-year-olds, who congregate at nearby nondenominational churches. There is a concern throughout the district that members’ faith is not growing. We need to invest more in lay evangelists. While the district staff is capable to help its congregations and schools, not enough congregations utilize or know what is offered, despite regular staff visits to circuit meetings, etc. Generally speaking, delegates believed that funds were sufficient to allow the district president and staff to carry out their Synod responsibilities. Current patterns of decline suggest that in 5–10 years many of our congregations will need to form dual-point parishes, merge into one congregation, or pass out of existence. This could affect as many as 90 of our 164 congregations. The financial solvency of the Ohio District will depend on what happens to those congregations that close and have large debts with our Ohio District Church Extension Fund and whose property has little resale value. Covering those debts will significantly impact how much money the district has for ministry projects, grants, and staffing. Ohio’s Ed Choice tuition program has helped keep several of our parochial schools open; how far and how long this program will continue remains out of our control and so casts a shadow over our school system, as does declining enrollment due largely to changing demographics.

In summary, delegates believed that in cooperation with and through the use of the vice-presidents and circuit visitors, the Ohio District president can react to the challenges and adapt to those challenges to carry out the official visits and provide appropriate guidance and support to member congregations for participating in the mission God has given the Church. While delegates also indicated that they believed that the Ohio District can maintain itself as a viable district of the LCMS, it is clear that the way it does ministry and provides supervision and assistance to its congregations and workers will see significant changes in the next three years.

Terry Cripe, *President*

R43

Oklahoma District

The Oklahoma District is a fellowship of congregations built upon the Rock of Jesus Christ, dependent upon His grace, confessing His name, and rejoicing in His power to change lives and eternities through the ongoing ministry, mission, and witness furthered by the saints of Oklahoma.

The Oklahoma District is made up of an all-volunteer staff of lay and called workers. These dedicated and gifted workers are committed to the work of the district while continuing to serve in their specific full-time calling. The only positions with salaries and stipends include an administrative assistant, an outdoor ministries director, and a business manager. Whether salaried or volunteer, the district staff is composed of gifted people who freely and readily share their gifts and time in extending the work of Christ's kingdom.

As a result of the 2013 Synod convention Res. 7-04A that districts evaluate their viability, an ongoing three-year study has been carried out. It was determined that even with an all-volunteer staff, which also includes the office of the district president, the ecclesiastical supervision defined in the Synod's Constitution (Art. XII) and Bylaws (Bylaw 1.2.1 [i]) is being carried out in a reasonable and timely manner. In an all-volunteer structure where individual parish responsibilities make it difficult for the district president to visit each congregation and pastor within every three-year span, his representatives make themselves available within the three regions and nine circuits. It was also determined that each congregation and pastor has available to them through the district sufficient resources to encourage them into various missions and ministries, new starts, school development, stewardship endeavors, and mission challenges. The district resources also seem sufficient in helping congregations and pastors through the struggles that develop within a parish setting, especially during difficult economic times. Even though the district spans the entire state of Oklahoma, these distances do not seem to break down a unity of spirit and purpose within the district mission. With the all-volunteer staff, the Oklahoma District is able to allot three-fourths of its budget for mission work, one-fourth of which is designated to the work of the Synod. Each year, the district board of directors steadfastly sees that this financial commitment to the Synod is fulfilled. The Holy Spirit continues to work dynamically within and through the 82 congregations of the Oklahoma District. The district continues to work toward the goal of planting new congregations while providing revitalization efforts for older and more rural congregations. Equipped with the effectual Word of God which is the sword of the Spirit, many new people groups are being touched with Christ's grace. The Oklahoma District is indeed a viable entity committed to fulfilling the mission of Christ.

In the Western Region, which includes the panhandle, outreach has continued among the Burmese Karen people, resulting in multiple Baptisms and confirmations. Lutherhaven Retreat Center has been refined to offer outdoor ministry for youth and adult groups. The tree-lined, spring-fed lake offers a wonderful retreat setting for those who choose to use the modern facilities located at the Center.

In the Central Region, which includes the metro area of Oklahoma City, the Hispanic ministry continues to grow and flourish. The district also called and finances a bi-vocational pastor for outreach to the growing Islamic community, with a special focus on the metro area. This is a slow process since the witnessing is done one-on-one. As a result of this endeavor, several Baptisms have occurred.

In the Eastern Region, which includes the metro area of Tulsa, spiritual doors are continually opened as outreach continues among the Hispanic, Liberian, and Hmong people. Camp Lutheroma, located near Tahlequah, has undergone extensive renovation by converting all the buildings for year-round use. It ministers to hundreds of youth during the summer and winter programs. It also opens the beautiful facilities along the Illinois River as retreat centers for groups, congregations, and family reunions.

Preaching stations continue to be maintained throughout the district with some serving as satellites for more established congregations. More and more, we are introducing bi-vocational pastorates in an attempt to provide Word and Sacrament ministry to struggling

congregations. And in southeastern Oklahoma, a ministry continues to families of prisoners incarcerated at the Oklahoma State Prison at McAlester. Each circuit is being encouraged to form a mission panel or board to identify local mission opportunities and potential church starts, and then work to bring these opportunities to fruition.

During the past triennium, our congregations have been impacted by extreme weather. We have watched droughts dry up crops, massive grass fires consume vegetation and homes, extensive rain bring flooding, high winds, ice storms, numerous earthquakes, and tornadoes. Our families, congregations, and communities are being severely impacted economically because of the extreme slump in oil prices. Yet through all of these times, the saints of the Oklahoma District continue to give generously of the resources entrusted to them by God. We thank God that He has counted us worthy to serve Him through our varied landscapes in unique ways within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Although life on this side of eternity may be shifting sand, we continue to be built firmly upon the Rock—our Lord Jesus Christ.

Barrie E. Henke, *President*

R44

Pacific Southwest District

"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).

With these words, the Pacific Southwest District began its new triennium June 2015. Under the theme "Chosen for This Moment," the district celebrated the mission opportunities of the past and planned for the future. Through our Baptism God has chosen each of us to be His witnesses in the world through our vocation. This report will highlight the work of the district and share information concerning district viability.

In looking at the Pacific Southwest District in 2016, we are proud to say the district is strong and healthy with wonderful opportunities for Gospel expansion. The district is 312 congregations and 170 schools scattered through Southern California, Arizona, and Southern Nevada.

District Viability:

Resources for the district president to carry out ecclesiastical supervision:

The Pacific Southwest District is well equipped to support the president in his ecclesiastical supervision. With 33 circuit visitors and 4 regional vice-presidents, congregations and workers are encouraged in their ministry. Ecclesiastical supervision is also supported by 2 mission facilitators and an executive director of school ministries. Reduction in staff due to finances are now being addressed with reorganization currently in place.

Resources for visitation:

Visitations are supported by the circuit visitors and vice-presidents with annual reporting to the district president. Regional meetings are held each year with circuit visitors and vice-presidents for training and for communication by the circuit visitors concerning congregation health. The president also makes personal visits with every congregation at the beginning of the call process and is provided with information concerning the challenges and opportunities of the congregations.

Appropriate guidance and support for participating in the mission:

Resources are readily available to congregations through the district website as well as staff visits. The district utilizes a variety of available resources depending on the size and mission field of the congregation. During the past triennium, two full-time mission facilitators, an expert school administration, and the resources

of LCEF assisted congregations and workers. New staffing arrangements are being implemented in 2016 to improve the resourcing of congregations. The staff remains faithful to our mission statement: “To effectively resource leaders, congregations and schools for transforming lives and making the Great Commission REAL.”

The district is also blessed by the presence of Concordia University Irvine, which provides workshops, seminars, and personnel to support the mission efforts of congregations. The Great Commission Summit at Concordia and Best Practices in Phoenix are two outstanding learning experiences during the year. Revitalization, replants, and new starts are a high priority going into 2016.

Encouragement and needed congregational services as well as counseling and support for struggling congregations:

The district employs a counselor for professional church workers as well as utilizing the resources of Grace Place, Shepherd’s Canyon, and Doxology for struggling workers. Individual staff support as well as a Legacy Task Force are now in place to assist the congregations that are struggling with survival. LINC LA has been working in the urban areas, especially Los Angeles, to replant ministries.

Adapt to new circumstances and meet changing needs related to mission and ministry of the church:

Change is happening so fast—this is an ongoing challenge for the board of directors and staff. We seek to address the needs of a post-church world in a multicultural and dynamic region of the country. Worshiping communities are challenged as the worship habits of “faithful members” are changing. Even the most active members worship less often as they are pulled by culture. We will never catch up, and we will never stop trying to be faithful to the Gospel and to our Lord’s mission. We will continue to look for new ways to communicate the never changing Gospel.

Meet financial responsibilities and obligations, and receive sufficient financial resources from its membership to support mission and ministry in the district and assist the mission and ministry of the Synod:

In the past triennium, the faithful support of our congregations and the diligent and wise work of the board of directors have enabled the district to be debt-free and financially sound. Support from congregations has been consistent through the past three years as some congregations are growing and others declining. Congregations are doing more to provide direct support for mission activities in the district, the Synod, and beyond.

A size and configuration to be effective, efficient, and capable of serving constituency:

A survey of district pastors in 2014 indicated overall support from the pastors and an appreciation for the work of the district. Those areas where increased support is desired is in youth ministry, mercy ministries, conflict resolution, and support of circuit fellowship. The pastors recognized strong support for our schools and assistance in the call process. The survey highlights for the board of directors the need for additional staff in the area of mission support, and that need has been addressed in 2016. The strength of a large district is evident throughout the Pacific Southwest District.

Provide adequate assistance and support to allow the district president to carry out the obligations of the office of district president as set forth in the Bylaws:

While the district would always benefit from more staff, our district president is well supported by the board of directors and praesidium. The district is strong and challenged by the post-churched culture. Ministry is exciting in the Pacific Southwest District.

Upon This Rock, Repent, Confess, Rejoice

During the past three years, the Pacific Southwest District has continued to do ministry in a rapidly changing multicultural part of

our nation. Staff reductions during the recession have continued to impact our effectiveness to support of congregations and schools. In 2014, the economic decline stabilized, and the district is now strong and financially solid.

The economy has greatly affected our schools as tuition-based education is harder to support. Most preschools continue to be strong; however, several of the elementary schools have closed. At the same time, strong schools remain strong and are blessed with admission counselors who support the recruitment of new students. Schools in Arizona have been blessed by state income tax deductions that provide scholarships for many of the students. One high school also closed in the past three years. School ministry continues to be a very important part of who we are in the Pacific Southwest District.

Over 80 congregations now have worship in a language other than English, and our outreach across cultures and languages continues to grow. The greatest need for expansion across cultures is workers who are bilingual and can communicate to first- and second-generation immigrant families. In 2015, the Hispanic population in California grew more through birth than immigration, indicating the need for workers who understand the culture and may or may not speak the language.

Immigration from the Global South and Asia continues to heavily impact the Pacific Southwest. Korean pastors continue to serve predominantly first-generation immigrants, while Chinese ministry is working with both first- and second-generation immigrants. African immigrants are also working bilingually. A continued growth in international students impacts our churches and schools from elementary through high school.

Moving into 2016, a new district staff person is being sought to focus on new ministry starts in support of those congregations who seek to expand the mission in their current location or through satellites and house churches.

The Pacific Southwest District remains committed to being a faithful witness of the Gospel in a post-churched culture. Ever-changing ministries seek to be faithful to an unchanging message of God’s love in Christ for all people.

Larry Stoterau, *President*

R45

Rocky Mountain District

The Rocky Mountain District (RMD) includes the states of Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico, with parishes also in El Paso, Texas; Paige, Arizona; and Venango and Big Springs, Nebraska.

The Rocky Mountain District—with its 181 congregations and 65 early childhood centers, schools, and high schools—is privileged to be the Lord’s mouth, hands, and feet to broadcast His saving Word far and wide. Additionally, the district’s congregations are blessed to have Lutheran Valley Retreat within our boundaries. This ministry, located in beautiful central Colorado, hosts camps and retreats for schools, confirmation programs, families, and congregations, in addition to a full program of summer camps for all ages.

School ministries continue to adjust, refine, and evolve as they’re pressured and responsive to changing models, shifting demographics, and new opportunities. Curriculum, instructional design, and modes of delivery have all changed dramatically in response to the needs of the 21st-century learner. Yet, in the midst of change our core purpose remains rooted in the mission of the church: discipleship and evangelism. Fundamentally, Lutheran schools play critical roles in assisting congregations and families in raising God-fearing children.

Directors of family ministry, children’s ministry, and youth ministry bless many congregations and communities throughout the district. Their specialized gifts and intentional efforts shape the church of

today and tomorrow Unfortunately, many of these servants find themselves released from their calls due to poorer financial circumstances or weakened stability and health of congregations. Yet, we remain grateful for their faithfulness in our midst.

During the last triennium, the Rocky Mountain District's congregations had the blessed opportunity to support the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tshwane, South Africa, in various ways through student tuition support and other seminary related operations; the Lutheran Hispanic Missionary Institute (LHMI) and their efforts training future Hispanic ministry leaders; the Biblical Orthodox Lutheran Mission (BOLM) and their ministry to the Arabic-speaking community; and Hispanic ministry throughout the district.

We celebrate the gift of Christ's forgiveness in our troubled lives as we reflect the Gospel in mercy by thought, word, and deed. We pray with and for our brothers and sisters as we are able to reach out to help and care. We work together, knowing we are together at the foot of His cross. *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own"* (Matt. 6:33). We rest upon this rock in all we do! Our *Life Together* in the Rocky Mountain District is challenging and full of opportunities. The greatest opportunity is the gathering of His people to hear His Word and receive new life through Baptism and forgiveness through His body and blood. Healthy church workers and congregations are high priority for the district board of directors. Here is the place for all to repent, confess, and rejoice in the promise of our Lord.

The future of the Rocky Mountain District's *Mercy, Witness and Life Together* continues to be carried out through the Gospel Gap—a circuit-based mission model adopted by the 2012 district convention, only expanded much more. This mission model seeks to identify where gaps exist whether they be geographic, demographic, relational, spiritual, or financial whereby in cooperation between the circuit and the district these gaps can be closed, healed, grown, or nurtured. The Gospel Gap places accountable stewarding of the triune God's mission through cooperation of congregational, circuit, and district levels.

The Gospel Gap we have in place fits nicely in the general principles for judging the viability of a district. The guidance and support to member congregations is at the local, circuit, area, and district levels. This is also demonstrated in the caring we all have and do for one another. This has brought a large geographical district into understanding we are together and made us "smaller." We are always evaluating and looking at the challenges for the congregations. Every location is unique, so the Gospel Gap again works. We are seeing more congregations struggling financially and especially smaller parishes who want their own pastor but lack the means to care for the pastor. This is a trickle-down effect as it hits the parish, district, and the Synod. The configuration of our district is manageable because of how we are set up in the Gospel Gap, and that is always being reviewed and challenged to make it better for all.

Allen Anderson, *President*

R46

SELC District

The year 2016 marks the 45th anniversary of the SELC as a non-geographical district of the LCMS. Following the breakup of the Synodical Conference, the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches accepted the invitation to become a part of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Since the early 1900s, the SELC has always been in agreement with the LCMS in matters of faith and practice and continues this mutual agreement.

First, I would like to thank the two previous SELC District presidents for their faithful work on behalf of the Synod and the district.

The Rev. Dr. Albert M. Marcis served as president from 1972 to 1997. He has also continued to serve the LCMS in various other capacities. The Rev. Dr. Carl H. Krueger Jr. served as president from 1997 to 2015, as well as serving in the military chaplaincy program. We thank both for serving their Lord and church so faithfully.

The SELC continues to spread the Gospel through its mission outreach, especially with satellite congregations in the Lake Mary and Tampa, Florida, areas. Work in the Hispanic communities in Chicago, Illinois, and Whiting, Indiana, continues with both a pastor and deaconess. Multicultural work continues in Toronto, Ontario, and Montreal, Quebec.

The LWML of the SELC District was one of six districts that hosted the 2013 LWML convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Our LWML continues to support the work of our mission congregations in our district and circuits.

The Lutheran Haven in Oviedo, Florida, has been our district retirement facility since 1947. The Haven also includes nursing facilities and other special care units. Plans are being made to expand the work. Many retired pastors and various district and Synod officers have retired at our Lutheran Haven.

The Luther League is the youth organization of our SELC District, dating back to 1927, when the first convention was held at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Whiting, Indiana, which will host the 89th annual convention in 2016. A goodly number of youth groups have also attended the Synod gatherings.

Financially, the SELC District continues to rank in the top third of contributions per communicant member for work at large, work at home, and the Synod's budget. With no district office building or paid staff, the SELC continues to practice good stewardship in support of the Synod, our two seminaries, and various other areas of district and Synod life and ministry.

In addition to meeting in district conventions, the SELC District as a whole meets for a district-wide convocation in non-convention years, as well as each circuit meeting quarterly for two-day conferences sometimes followed with our district board of directors meetings. As a lifelong member of the SELC, I can attest to the brotherly love of all of our pastors and church workers, and despite the distances, we have a close relationship with all.

SELC District

Showing Everyone Life in Christ

Showing Everyone the Love of Christ.

Andrew J. Dzurovcik, *President*

R47

South Dakota District

Greetings to the Synod from the 30,000 baptized members in the 108 congregations of the South Dakota District! We are blessed to walk together with you in serving our gracious God.

2013 Res. 7-04A requested our evaluation of district viability, and the respondents to our request for such feedback, via the survey provided, were overwhelmingly positive in holding to the opinion that the South Dakota District is indeed "viable." The resources of the district are being used to support the congregations, schools, and other ministries within our state; the district staff are attentive to the needs of these ministries; and, above all, God's precious Word is being shared throughout the 77,000 square miles of the state, if not through the physical presence of congregations (we have none in the extreme northwest part of South Dakota), certainly through the televised worship service we broadcast every Sunday morning throughout the state (called "Main Street Living").

Yet, some weaknesses were identified by respondents to the viability survey. Some respondents felt that the district staff tend to be more

“reactive” than “proactive” in their service. That is, it is perceived that there is much more time spent by the staff in assisting congregations who are vacant or who are struggling in other ways rather than in time spent in helping ministries to develop strategies for ministry in these difficult days of post-Christian life in America and as the rural ministries deal with the 21st-century flight of people to cities. Moreover, that we have not planted a new congregation in more than ten years is another criticism and reality cited.

Those weaknesses aside, much Kingdom work is getting done here in the Rushmore State by congregations and schools of the LCMS. Our district commits 32 percent of our congregational mission receipts to the Synod. We continue to go even beyond this commitment, with additional financial and prayer support of world missions via the TIM program, having supported Amy (Hartwig) Kashenov in her work in Kazakhstan from 1994 to 2012, until her ill health forced her to leave her service in the mission field. In the 2015 District Convention, after honoring Amy for her work, the delegates elected to shift the support we had given her to Rev. Dr. Alan Ludwig, via TIM, as he ministers on our behalf at the seminary in Novosibirsk, Russia.

In the state, our district maintains ministries to the Native Americans on both the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian Reservations in southern South Dakota. We are seeing an increase in worship attendance and in adult Baptisms in these ministries through the faithful, patient service of Revs. Albert Sutton and Andrew Utecht and their many lay helpers. Additionally, congregations in Sioux Falls are ministering to and with new Americans, especially those from African countries. Chera Namera, an Oromo-speaking Ethiopian man, became the second African immigrant to be ordained as an LCMS pastor in our district when he was ordained as an EIIT pastor in 2014. Chera serves his fellow Oromo people at Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls.

Our state was rocked by severe weather—particularly by tornadoes—in the past triennium, with especially devastating consequences in the communities of Wessington Springs and Delmont. Zion Lutheran Church in Wessington Springs received heavy damage to their church building by the tornado of June 18, 2014, but was able to accomplish the needed repairs in order to continue their ministry in their building. Zion Lutheran Church in Delmont, however, endured the tragedy of having both their beautiful German Gothic church building and their parsonage destroyed in the tornado on Mother’s Day 2015. In both cases, the dear heavenly Father spared both congregations any loss of human life. And in both cases, God’s people throughout the Synod provided an outpouring of financial support to assist in rebuilding. Special thanks to LCMS Disaster Response and to our own District Disaster Response coordinator, Rev. L. Scott Spiehs, for being on site after both tornadoes to provide invaluable guidance and encouragement.

Finally, we in the South Dakota District need to acknowledge, with thanksgiving to the Lord of the Church, the nine years of faithful service by Rev. Dr. Dale Sattgast as our district president (2006–15). As he headed off into retirement, we are honored to call Rev. Sattgast our “President Emeritus” (a title bestowed on him at the 2015 District Convention), and we are grateful that he and his wife, Debbie, will continue to reside in South Dakota. We also acknowledge the 30 years of excellent service of our district’s business manager, Mr. Randall Gayken, and the good work of our other full-time servants at the district office: Rev. Darren Olson, executive secretary; Julie Pike, administrative assistant; and Chad Zinnel, accountant.

There can be no doubt that there is plenty of Kingdom work for us to do within these 77,000 square miles and beyond. We in the South Dakota District will push forward in ministry under the theme of “Called into Partnership: For MERCY” this triennium, led by our Lord’s example and by His words in Mark 10:45: “For even the Son

of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

And so we serve and will continue to serve, taking our refuge in and standing ‘Upon this Rock: Repent[ing], Confess[ing], Rejoic[ing].’ We go forward believing that the South Dakota District is a blessing to our Synod and is providing viable ministry in this part of the Kingdom, all because Christ, the Rock of our salvation, first served us, is with us, and is blessing us.

Scott Sailer, *President*

R48

South Wisconsin District

The 54th convention of the South Wisconsin District was held July 7–9, 2015, at Concordia University Wisconsin. The theme was “Walk Humbly with Our God,” based on Micah 6:8. Major presenters were Dr. Andrew Bartelt, a son of South Wisconsin, who led the delegates in a Bible study of the convention’s theme, and attorney Kevin Theriot from Alliance Defending Freedom, who led the convention in a discussion of the legal risks and challenges that the unchristian culture presents to the church.

District President Wille reported the following:

1. First and foremost, it was shared that as of the end of April 2015, SWD is debt-free. If you remember back in 2006 when I was first elected, we discovered that SWD carried an indebtedness of \$5.5 million capital indebtedness, and we were nearly \$1 million in operational indebtedness. Due to your generosity and the watchful eye of a great many, those debts have now all been paid off. South Wisconsin is financially solvent and healthy. That means we can now move forward into mission and church planting, not weighted by the ball and chain of debt.
2. Also on the agenda was Pastor Ted Krey, regional director for Latin America and lead missionary for the Dominican Republic. Really great things are happening in the Dominican Republic as Pastor Krey and his fellow missionaries, ordained, commissioned, and lay, reach out with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. As you may know, SWD is one of the partners in the effort to plant a Lutheran church body in the Dominican Republic. In connection with that, Pastor David Preus was also present. Pastor Preus heads up theological education at the Palmar Arriba seminary. The goal is to create a self-sufficient, confessional Lutheran church body in the DR that will be a blessing for the region.
3. Because of what is happening in our culture, we also invited Kevin Theriot to be with us. Kevin is senior counsel with the nonprofit Alliance Defending Freedom. He spoke about our First Amendment rights, rights that are systematically being taken away from us. Tim Goeglein, who was in the “W” Bush administration, said this in a presentation at the 2015 March for Life: “The millennials are the first generation in American history that are measurably losing their rights.” And we with them.

Anti-Christian sentiment is afoot. Worship attendance is declining. Indifference has set in. We are living in a culture that has accepted Satan’s lie. Sin is no longer that serious; it is merely a choice to live differently, a choice to live according to one’s own selfish desires, and death merely is the end. To that Hermann Sasse comments: “Where man denies that he and others are dying, the terrible dissolution [of his culture] is held up as a glorious ascent, and decline is viewed as an advance, the likes of which has never been experienced.”

What are we to do? At times like this a confessional Lutheran church like our LCMS ought not to be paralyzed by mushy indifference. A confessional Lutheran church, we are called to care about people both in the church and out of the church, about their families, about their body and soul, about their eternal well-being. A confessional Lutheran church, we are not one to wring our hands in despair. It is time to confess, humbly and yet boldly.

A confessional Lutheran church, we ought never be so ashamed as to water down our message for the sake of being more palatable to a self-absorbed, self-motivated culture. We are Lutheran Christians. As St. Paul tells the Corinthians: “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 Corinthians 1:23–24.

4. President Wille concluded his remarks to the convention, stating, “This is our God-given time to proclaim and confess the saving name of Christ Jesus. This is our time to honor our vocation as the people of God in our various life stations. This is our time to embrace our communities with the Gospel. This is our time to plant new Lutheran congregations. This is our time to teach our children and grandchildren who Jesus is and what He does for us. My hope and prayer is that the simple phrase “Confessing Christ for the Next Generation” will be the focus of everything we do over the next three years with the following focus: this is our time to be distinctly Lutheran, this is our time to honor our vocations, this is our time to embrace our communities, and this is our time to plant new congregations.

Among several other items that should be noted is that for the last four years, SWD has partnered with the North Wisconsin District in training our circuit visitors. A year ago, Rev. Tom Eckstein from North Dakota led the CVs in a discussion of God’s gift of marriage as well as ministering to same-sex-oriented people. This year, Ted Kober from Ambassadors of Reconciliation led the CVs through a new Bible study and training in conflict resolution.

On the church-planting front, good things are happening in SWD. Cross-culturally, a new Hispanic church plant is underway in the Sheboygan area. Rev. Carlos Hernandez, who preached at the installation of Vicar David Blas, stated, “If we can start a Hispanic congregation in Sheboygan, we can start one anywhere.” There are 27 Anglo congregations in Sheboygan County. A second new plant in Sheboygan is among the Hmong people. In the Madison area, Bethlehem Sun Prairie is partnering with the district to restart a plant in Waunakee, a bedroom community of Madison. Plans are evolving for additional mission plants in SWD.

As you can see from this report, the South Wisconsin District is quite viable. We are 214 congregations, nearly 100 elementary and early childhood schools, 6 high schools, and 1 university. The congregations and church workers of SWD are wholeheartedly committed to our Lutheran Confessions, to our Lutheran identity. As such, we are also committed wholeheartedly to reaching out with the Gospel. We are committed to planting Lutheran congregations. We are also one of the original partners in the Dominican Republic Foro, which has now been duplicated in other areas of South America.

I close this report with the words of Martin Luther, who takes us to the heart of our faith when in his Preface to the Epistle to the Galatians (St. Louis edition IX 9) he writes: “In my heart there reigns, and shall ever reign, this one article, namely, faith in my dear Lord Christ, which is the sole beginning, middle, and end of all spiritual and godly thoughts which I may have at any time, day or night.”

John C. Wille, *President*

R49

Southeastern District

Note: 2013 Res. 7-04A requires district presidents to submit a report of the viability of the district. Aspects of viability include visitation, mission work, adaptation to new circumstances related to mission and ministry, congregational services, financial obligation, size, and configuration. These aspects of viability are highlighted throughout this report.

Our SED convention. Gathered under the theme *God@Work4Each1: Standing iN Faith—Walking iN witness—Running iN Joy*, the delegates celebrated the completion of our ABLAZE goals ahead of the Oct. 31, 2017, completion date. These goals were mandated by previous conventions:

Prayer Partners

- Goal: 3,000 prayer partners
- Actual: 3,007 prayer partners

Outreach Mission Teams Trained

- Goal: 60 outreach mission teams trained
- Actual: 76 outreach teams

Congregations Involved in Mission Outreach

- Goal: 100 congregations involved in Mission outreach
- Actual: 153 congregations reported Mission outreach activity

New Ministry Initiated

- Goal: 100 new ministries initiated
- Actual: 101 new ministries initiated

Critical events where one person shared their faith in Jesus with another individual

- Goal: 2.5 million critical events
- Actual: 2,708,477 critical events recorded

Completion of these five goals is one way to measure the mission and ministry viability of the SED.

Our Mission Work. The Southeastern District includes York County, Pennsylvania; Delaware; Maryland; Virginia; District of Columbia; North and South Carolina. Our district is divided into three regions: Northern, Central, and Southern. In those regions we have 212 churches, 90 schools, and 45 missions (not yet chartered). Living in the borders of the SED are 32,225,000 people (10 percent of the population of the United States), who live in 3,878 zip codes. Eighty percent of our neighbors do not attend worship. We live in the mission field. Since our ministries have a presence in only 250/3,878 zip codes, we recognize the opportunity that exists since our baptized membership lives in most if not all of the zip codes.

Our delegates adopted the following Mission and Vision:

Mission: In grateful response to God’s grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the SED connects people with Jesus.

Vision: As we work together to connect our neighbors to Jesus, lives are transformed, and God’s kingdom grows.

Fueled by God’s Means of Grace (Word and Sacraments) we seek to equip 10 percent of our baptized members (including those of us who are ordained and commissioned workers) to reach God’s precious children in the neighborhoods where we live, work, and play with the love of Jesus—even as He called, equipped, sent, and received back the 72 (Luke 10). In our LIFE TOGETHER we hope to develop accountable and sustainable ministry in 500 new neighborhoods beyond our present congregations, schools, and missions over the next six years that will be shaped through actions of MERCY and bold WITNESS.

In addition to English-speaking new church starts, much of our new promising mission work is being initiated by those who come from around the world. Our first Latino and Ethiopian congregations were chartered this last year. We have outreach and worship that are Latino, Liberian, Chinese, Korean, Hmong, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Eritrean, and Ethiopian—both Amharic and Oromo. An Ethiopian diaspora has emerged in Washington DC with an estimated 400,000 documented people. The SED added Rev. Dr. Yared Halche to our staff to assist us in responding to the cross-cultural opportunities. The SED’s response to the mission opportunity through iNeighborhood ministry and mission planting among ethnic groups is a mark of the SED viability.

Visitation. The district board of directors receives a report from the district president regarding the visitation of the churches, schools, and ministries conducted by the district president, regional vice-presidents, circuit visitors, and executive staff of the SED, all of whom ensure a visit within the three-year cycle. Many of our congregations have been visited multiple times over the three-year cycle. Over 25 years ago, the SED put deployed staff in each region to bring the front door of the district office much closer to every church. Their work is supported by our staff specializing in congregational services, schools, and mission development, assuring proactive response to the needs of our ministries, another way of highlighting viability.

Our Financial Stewardship. Our SED gives a double tithe (22 percent) of the mission partnership support received from the congregations to the LCMS for its work. Our mission and ministry budget, largely supported by our congregations, continues to be robust, but we also recognize new stewardship strategies are needed for the next era of the church. Our stewardship life demonstrates viability.

While the church in the United States seeks to find balance in a time of significant change, we who live in the SED know our ultimate viability is Jesus Christ. Through Him we have been called in the waters of Baptism, are fueled by God's powerful Word, and are forgiven and fed at the Lord's Table. So we are "Standing iN Faith—Walking iN Witness—Running iN Joy!"

John R. Denninger, *President*

R50

Southern District

The Southern District enters a new triennium under the theme "Hope—Jesus Changes Everything." Concordia College Alabama was chosen as the site of our convention to highlight one of many ways we have been witnesses to the promised dramatic change Jesus continues to bring about through His people who have been changed by the Gospel. We are bearers of the hope to the world that is in desperate need of the life changes, abundant and eternal, that Jesus brings in grace.

During 2015, the Southern District observed two key anniversaries: the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights March, which began at the Edmond Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, on Blood Sunday, made a second attempt on Turn Around Tuesday, and finally succeeded in crossing on Restart Thursday; and the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, which devastated an area of the Southern District equal in size to the state of Minnesota. Concordia College was chosen as our convention site because of the significant contributions it made to the Civil Rights Movement and continues to make to its community. During the district convention, the Southern District Torch Bearers of Hope Award was instituted. The first recipients of the award were the 23 surviving members of the Concordia family who participated in the Civil Rights March. The second recipient was Camp Restore, which continues rebuilding efforts in New Orleans. The last recipient was Pastor Ed Brashier, the district's Disaster Relief Coordinator, who has deployed to many areas of the country to assist in recovery as our Ambassador of Hope.

Through these many challenging and humanly impossible situations, the people of the Southern District have been and continue to be heralds of the "Hope That Jesus Changes Everything."

The district, as directed by the Synod in convention, undertook a viability self-study. The required questions were asked on a survey of all district officers, workers, and congregations. The mandated reporting of the results follow.

"Is the Southern District a geographical size and configuration to be effective, efficient, and capable of serving all who make up its constitu-

ency?" Just the right size 75.9%; Should be bigger 5.8%; Should be smaller 18.3%.

"Does the Southern District leadership adapt to new circumstances and meet changing needs related to the mission and ministry of the church?" Frequently—Always 86.7%; Seldom—Almost never 13.3%.

"Does the Southern District staff provide encouragement, appropriate guidance and support (e.g., stewardship, conflict resolution, crisis counseling, financial counseling, calling process, collaborative efforts, networking, nourishment, and help with evangelistic outreach, etc.) to member congregations for participating in the mission God has given to the Church?" Frequently—Always 81.8%; Seldom—Almost never 18.2%.

"Does the Southern District staff provide encouragement and support for Lutheran pre-schools, elementary and high schools?" Frequently—Always 41.3%; Seldom—Almost never 9.1%; No opinion 49.6%.

"Does the Southern District Board of Directors provide adequate resources for the district president or his representative (vice-president or circuit visitor) in carrying out the minimum requirements for official visits to each congregation and its pastor, at least once every three years, to be a brotherly adviser, 'reminding them of the joy of serving in the mission and ministry of the church'?" Adequate 73.6%; More than enough 14%; Not enough 12.4%.

"Does the Southern District Board of Directors provide adequate resources for the district president to carry out ecclesiastical supervision of congregations and workers in a reasonable and timely manner defined in the Synod's Constitution as 'evangelical encouragement and support, care, protection, counsel, advice, admonition, and, when necessary, appropriate disciplinary measure'?" Adequate 73.2%; Not enough 10.7%; More than enough 17.5%.

"Based on your answers thus far to the questions asked of how well the Southern District is meeting the 'general principles' of 'viability,' to what extent is your district capable of carrying out its purpose and functions?" Sustainable 42.1%; Very strong 12.4%; Strong 30.6%; Weak 14.9%.

The Southern District gives thanks for the sustaining hand of God, who provides us continuing viability to be witnesses to the HOPE in us that JESUS CHANGES EVERYTHING.

Kurtis D. Schultz, *President*

R51

Southern Illinois District

The Southern Illinois District is comprised of 95 congregations and two mission churches. There are 22 parochial schools, three Lutheran high schools, and 18 free-standing day cares and/or pre-schools. The district is served by three full-time staff, a part-time bookkeeper, a part-time LCEF vice-president, and a part-time LCEF promotions director. The LCMS Foundation has established a full-time worker based out of our district office this past year.

The District Viability Study was performed by the Southern Illinois District board of directors and the board for spiritual care (the president, vice-president, and circuit visitors) with input from various workers and laity. The short answer to every question is yes.

Southern Illinois is geographically compact. The district is a little over four hours driving time north to south and slightly over two hours west to east. The majority of congregations are located within a 75-mile radius of St. Louis, Missouri. Fully one-fourth of our congregations started in 1865 or earlier, with several pre-dating the formation of the Missouri Synod.

Parochial education is an important part of ministry within the district, with well over half of the congregations belonging to a school association. Mr. Roger Sprengel serves as our full-time Schools and General Executive (SAGE). He visits all the elementary and high schools annually, along with half of the day cares/preschools.

Prison ministry is a major emphasis in our region. With the closing of many coal mines in the last 40 years, towns have sought to

have state correctional centers built near them. Each week, around 25 volunteers serve about 30 county jails, state and federal correctional institutions, and mental health centers. Our prison ministry coordinators have worked closely with the LCMS Office of National Mission in hosting three synodwide conferences in the last 10 years.

The congregations, schools, and workers appreciate having quick access to the district staff. The district office in Belleville is within two hours driving time of most congregational and school ministries.

The district is part of a mission partnership between the LCMS Office of International Mission and the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. Volunteers made three trips to visit South Africa to attend their Synod convention, assess prison ministry, and encourage pastors in Botswana.

There are no communities exceeding 50,000 people in population within the district. There is, however, a number of smaller communities closely connected in the Metro East region of the St. Louis metropolitan area. East St. Louis, Cahokia, and Granite City are examples of industries leaving the area, urban blight, and a declining population base. By the grace of God, Unity Lutheran Church and Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School are doing excellent work in East St. Louis. Unity is spearheading a neighborhood renewal project called the Lansdowne Community Initiative. Blessed with a grant from Lutheran Housing Support, several homes will undergo rehab this summer.

Like congregations throughout the United States, those within Southern Illinois have their challenges too. Declining rural and small-town populations are a challenge to supporting once lively, thriving communities and congregations. One congregation closed in this current triennium. There is an increasing Latino and Hispanic population throughout Southern Illinois that needs evangelizing. Our efforts have not proved successful as a good portion of this population is transient or seasonal. Our parochial schools live on the edge financially from year to year. Declining birthrates impact them also. Through it all, the Lord is faithful. He continues to bless and open doors for His Word and Sacraments to be lived and shared in local churches. We are confident that He who has begun this good work among us will bring it to completion on the day Jesus returns.

Timothy Scharr, *President*

R52

Texas District

The Texas District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has studied its viability since the last convention by reflecting on the questions suggested by the Synod. We thank God for blessing our viability to carry out His mission and to support and serve congregations and preaching stations throughout the district.

God continues to bless us with the financial means to aggressively be about His mission of reaching people with the Good News of Jesus. During the past three years, the district was blessed with 23 new Word and Sacrament congregations. The number of mission networks has grown. These local networks engage in studying the community, seeking God's wisdom in how they can minister to the community, and starting new ministries.

The Texas District deploys many of its staff throughout the district so that there is a support presence in every area of the district. These workers connect with congregations and work closely with circuit visitors and area vice-presidents. They spend most of their time assisting congregations, circuits, and mission networks in seeing and acting upon the mission opportunities surrounding them.

An *Ablaze!* goal of starting 200 Word and Sacrament congregations between 2004 and 2017 was set by the Texas District. Today, our count is around 105 new starts. Setting this high goal has blessed

us by maintaining our focus on the ways God is guiding and leading. He has opened many doors to various people groups, including the first Arabic-speaking Lutheran congregation, which became a member of the LCMS in 2015. Today, 15 different languages are used in worship in LCMS congregations in the Houston area alone, reaching 25 different people groups.

The population of the state is experiencing a net growth of five million people every 10 years. The district continues to ask God to direct and guide us as we attempt to reach our growing population with the Gospel.

Kenneth Hennings, *President*

R53

Wyoming District

By God's grace, in the Wyoming District the Gospel is purely and faithfully preached and taught in accordance with Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, and the Sacraments are administered as Christ has mandated. The district, with the Church of all times and places, confesses with the apostles, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." We rejoice to hear the declaration of Christ, "On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:16, 18). With repentance and thanksgiving, the Wyoming District sustains, defends, and promotes the ministry of this confession.

The Wyoming District is made up of 60 congregations served by 50 active pastors, including 39 congregations in Wyoming, 20 in western Nebraska, and one in Colorado. The district mission commitments include the campus ministry at the University of Wyoming in Laramie and the Wind River Indian Mission in Fort Washakie and Crowheart. There are five elementary/middle schools in the district and a total of 13 preschools. The five schools have adopted the classical, liberal arts approach to knowledge and education.

Among the strengths of the Wyoming District is the diligent use of the circuit pastoral conferences by the pastors, who together study Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, writings of the fathers of the church, and other theological and contemporary topics. The district pastoral conference meets twice annually for three days of speakers, study, worship, and recreation together. The Day School teachers likewise meet annually for three days, joining the pastoral conference in worship and sometimes sharing the speaker.

The district expects its president, vice-presidents, and circuit visitors to visit its pastors and congregations at least once every three years, to strengthen them in their faithful use of the Gospel and Sacraments, and to encourage them in their challenges and opportunities. The schools are also visited regularly by the education chairman and the district president. The visitations help to strengthen the confessional unity and bonds of brotherhood among pastors, teachers, congregations, and schools of the district.

In this past triennium, the Wyoming District pastors entered into formal Koinonia meetings with the pastors of the Atlantic District. The pastors of the two districts met in New York City in May 2014 and in Cheyenne, Wyoming, in September 2015. The discussions continued with a smaller group from each district in February 2016. These meetings may be described as both challenging and fruitful, as the pastors labor together to carry out the divine mandate of maintaining the church's confessional unity in the Gospel and the Sacraments (Eph. 4:3–6).

The Wyoming District faces continuing challenges in declining rural and frontier communities, aging demographics, and a shrinking young-adult population that is increasingly alienated from Christ, the church, and Christian morality. The district responds to these challenges by supporting faithful Gospel ministry, the use of dual parishes

and other creative arrangements for pastoral service, an annual evangelism conference, and classical Lutheran schools where these can be established.

The 2015 Wyoming District convention was held under the theme “We Believe, Teach, and Confess Holy Baptism.” Our Baptism into the holy, triune God inaugurates and encompasses the entire life of the Christian in the one holy Christian and apostolic Church. In convention business, the Rev. Richard Boche completed nine years as district president and retired from office. He is succeeded by the Rev. John Hill. Among resolutions approved, the district asked for a task force to explore and possibly initiate the establishing of a classical Lutheran high school for the district.

The district completed its triennial emphasis on Witness, Mercy, and Life Together. In the new triennium, we will be celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation under the theme “The Bride Confesses Christ.” Our pastors and congregations will especially be encouraged to study our public confession and doctrine in the documents of the Book of Concord of 1580.

Report on Viability of the District

As directed by 2013 Resolution 7-04A, the Wyoming District conducted an evaluation of the district in 2015 through its praesidium, circuit visitors, and board of directors, followed by the congregations and circuit pastoral conferences. The following points correspond to the revised “General Principles for Judging the Viability of a District.”

1. Given the size of the district, the Wyoming District president is able to “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” (Constitution, Art. XII 7), along with other duties enumerated in Article XII. He is able to provide “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” (Bylaw 1.2.1 [i]).
2. The Wyoming District has been doing formal district visitations for three decades. These visitations are done by the district president, vice-presidents, and circuit visitors. The size of the district makes it possible for the district president to visit each of the congregations informally in each triennium. The district president knows the pastors and other church workers, the congregations, and many of the lay leaders, and is able to carry out his office pastorally based on that knowledge.
3. The district provides guidance and support to the congregations regarding God’s mission with regular visitation and oversight, pastoral conferences, and district convocations.
4. The district provides encouragement and needed congregational services by making the congregations aware of district and Synod resources, and by the work of its commissions and the conferences provided by the district. It should be noted that the district office has a business manager, who also divides time as the LCEF vice-president in Wyoming and Montana, and otherwise employs only a half-time administrative assistant. Because the administrative operation is lean, much of the district support is supplied by volunteers who have been elected or appointed to office. As a result, the work of the district is closely shared by its pastors and laymen, who have ownership in the well-being of its congregations and schools. The district has strong circuits and circuit pastoral conferences, excellent visitation, a well-attended annual evangelism conference, youth conferences and camp, excellent schools, and great harmony in doctrine and practice.
5. The district is adapting both to new opportunities with schools and to new challenges with the declining rural and small-town population and congregational demographics. Adaptation includes exploring new parish arrangements and having more congregations being served by pastors on a part-time basis. Although the district has a congregation in almost all its larger towns, it continues to explore options for outreach to a modest-size Hispanic population. It also has responded vigorously to changing cultural and societal challenges in the area of

marriage, life, and family, providing leadership and guidance to the pastors and congregations of the district.

6. The district currently meets its financial commitments in supporting a small district staff, the Wind River Indian Mission, and a vigorous campus ministry at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, giving generous financial aid for church-work students and graduates, and giving limited financial support to several small and isolated congregations. The district currently sends over 15 percent of its annual budget to the Synod. As the membership of district congregations ages and declines through attrition, it appears that the district budget will experience increasing pressure.
7. With one exception, the district’s 60 congregations are no farther than a five-hour drive from the district office. The smaller number of pastors and congregations encourages fraternity among the pastors, collegiality among the lay people, and hands-on participation in district activities.
8. Between the office staff and the volunteer service of vice-presidents, circuit visitors, commission members, and others, the district provides the assistance and support needed for the district president to carry out the functions and obligations of his office.

In summary, the leadership, pastors, and congregations of the Wyoming District believe that the district has the history, size, and culture to continue to be viable and united for years to come. Because the primary scriptural and confessional duty of the district is to provide ecclesiastical visitation to its congregations, schools, and church workers, the district is particularly well suited to provide the strengthening in confession and encouragement in mission that such visitation affords.

John Hill, *President*

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Lutheran Women’s Missionary League

The Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML) is the official women’s auxiliary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Since 1942, the object of our auxiliary has been mission education, mission inspiration, mission service, and financial grants for mission needs.

- Mission statement: The mission of the LWML is to assist each woman of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in affirming her relationship with the triune God so that she is enabled to use her gifts in ministry to the people of the world.
- Vision statement: The LWML is the leading group for LCMS women where each woman is welcomed and encouraged to use her unique God-given gifts as she supports global missions and serves the Lord with gladness.
- LWML is made up of 38 geographic districts and two non-geographic districts.
- Executive Committee members serving four-year terms are President, Vice-President Christian Life, Vice-President Communication, Vice-President Gospel Outreach, Vice-President Organizational Resources, Vice-President Special Focus Ministries, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, and two Pastoral Counselors.
- National conventions are held every two years in the odd-numbered years at varied locations. The 2015 convention was in Des Moines, Iowa, and had a registration of 4,622.
- Mission grant goals adopted by delegates totaled a record \$2 million to be funded during 2015–17. District mission goals for 2014–16 total \$5,508,925.

Current mission grant recipients for the 2015–17 biennium include the following:

- MOST Ministries—Clean Water and Evangelism: \$50,000
- Disaster Response Trailers, LCMS Disaster Response: \$80,000
- Cancer Care—Phil’s Friends: \$50,000

- Renovations of JEM Seminary Buildings, Lutheran Church in Nigeria: \$120,000
- Redeeming Life Maternity Home, Sanford, Florida: \$100,000
- Hope and Healing to the Navajo People, Lutheran Indian Ministries: \$75,000
- Refugee Camp Outreach in Lebanon, Lutheran Hour Ministries: \$72,000
- Healthy Families, Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska: \$60,000
- LCMS Global Seminary Initiative, LCMS Seminaries: \$100,000
- Training Teachers and Leaders, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis: \$100,000
- Women of the Pearl/Lutheran Seminary Completion Uganda: \$100,000
- Lutheran Bible Translators in Botswana, Ethiopia, and Angola/Namibia: \$50,000
- International student scholarships, St. Paul High School, Concordia, Missouri: \$32,500
- Apple of His Eye indigenous leader training in Israel: \$100,000
- LCMS National Housing Support Corporation, 10 home projects: \$100,000
- LCMS Partner Churches deaconess training: \$90,000
- Lutheran Young Adult Corps: \$25,000
- Providing Hope for Detroit Acts 2 Enterprise: \$100,000
- Rosa Young Academies, LCMS Black Ministry: \$25,000

LWML women continue to actively bring mission awareness to their congregations along with their acts of service. Bible studies and devotions produced through the LWML include daily email devotions, DVD Bible studies (two new ones are in production), yearly prayer services, and special services to recognize and promote the work of the organization on LWML Sunday.

The LWML has a long history of supporting both monetarily and through prayer and gifts our church workers, seminarians, and pastors. Our grants, both national and district, support seminary and deaconess programs in our partner churches as well.

Our women also are urged to be out in their communities engaging with the local population, giving them opportunities to witness about Christ while serving His people.

Our special outreach ministries to engage with multicultural women, young women, teens, and church workers continue to bring these special women into participation and leadership roles in our organization.

We continue our media expansion through our website, Facebook and Twitter conversations, Pinterest, and eNews mailings. Our participation in “Giving Tuesday” following Thanksgiving revealed an active Internet following. Our publication, *Lutheran Woman’s Quarterly*, published quarterly, is the highest-circulated women’s magazine in the LCMS.

Our 2017 convention will be in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on June 22–15, 2017. We look forward to supporting our fellow Lutherans in the Utah-Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, and Rocky Mountain LWML districts with our attendance at this our 75th anniversary celebration. Special exhibits and entertainment will celebrate God’s faithfulness and blessings to the LWML for 75 years. We will meet under the theme “Jesus Christ above All” with our Scripture from Philippians 2:9. We invite everyone to join in this celebration.

Supporting our church, built upon the Rock, and rejoicing in the opportunity given to repent and confess directly to our God because of what Jesus did, we rejoice with the Church as we “Serve the Lord with Gladness” in LWML.

Patti Ross, *President*

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International Lutheran Laymen’s League (Lutheran Hour Ministries)



Introduction:

The International Lutheran Laymen’s League (Int’l LLL) serves as one of the two grassroots auxiliaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) as well as an auxiliary of Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC) by focusing its energies on a mission of *Bringing Christ to the Nations—and the Nations to the Church*. Because of God’s great blessings and the success He granted through **The Lutheran Hour®** radio program, in 1992 the Int’l LLL captured the essence of its ministry by adopting the title Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) to better describe its outreach ministries. Thus, the International Lutheran Laymen’s League is the corporate name under which the organization does business; Lutheran Hour Ministries is the public identity under which it conducts worldwide Gospel outreach on a daily basis.

LHM is a trusted expert in mass media proclamation with a global network of partners. The ministry works in many areas where other organizations are not present and uses local missionaries who know the language and culture. For nearly 100 years, God has used LHM to bring the changeless Christ to a changing world. While the communication methods may have shifted, the message of sharing the Good News has remained the same.

LHM has identified two areas of emphasis for its ministry efforts that currently reach into more than 50 countries on six continents:

- **Gospel Proclamation:** Proclaim the message of Christ in a way that generates an opportunity for people to respond, encourage people to ask questions or for resources, and/or request more information. The ultimate goal is to connect people to the church.
- **Equipping the Church for Evangelistic Activity:** Build and strengthen relationships with all constituent groups, including the existing church to create a new identity where sharing the message of Christ in our communities is a major part of who we are.

God’s Blessings upon Lutheran Hour Ministries’ Outreach in the Past Triennium:

LHM’s significant activities accomplished since our 2013 convention report include:

- Expanded ministry around the world with new centers opening in **Indonesia, Mongolia, Turkey, and Laos**, while also looking at additional opportunities throughout the Middle East in countries such as **Egypt**. LHM also established the concept of satellite outreach centers to extend the evangelistic activity of an established ministry center into another country or region—and to enhance the outreach of a local missionary or indigenous church in the new location. Satellite operations are now open in **Peru** (a satellite of LHM—Panama), the **Dominican Republic** (a satellite of LHM—Nicaragua), and **Bolivia** (a satellite of LHM—Paraguay). The responsibility of administering the satellite center remains with the established center, but programs are developed in conjunction with local mission or ministry partners.
- Stepped up holistic ministry efforts to share the Gospel with hurting people in many countries, including the following:
 - Provided assistance to victims of ISIS atrocities, such as Syrian and Iraqi refugees living in camps throughout Lebanon. During frequent visits to the camps **LHM—Lebanon** staff builds one-on-one relationships with the refugee families and large groups

- of children that allows them to share the Gospel while also providing care for their physical needs that larger refugee-assistance agencies may not realize. To date, LHM has served thousands of refugees in this region with humanitarian assistance and with a personal witness of Christ's love for them. Grants from the LCMS and the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) have helped LHM further expand efforts in these camps.
- Responded to the virulent outbreak of Ebola hemorrhagic fever (EHF) in West Africa that resulted in more than 2,200 people infected and more than 1,100 dead. **LHM—Liberia** partnered with the government to air public service announcements on its national radio program teaching people the symptoms of the disease, informing them about basic hygiene, and encouraging them to trust health officials in seeking immediate treatment. The ministry also organized youth sports camps where participants went into local slums to distribute flyers about Ebola.
 - Reacted to flooding and landslides caused by heavy monsoon-season rains and tropical cyclone Komen that displaced people from their homes and disrupted Myanmar's economy. With resources provided by LHM donors and a grant from Disaster Response through the LCMS, **LHM—Myanmar** supplied food, drinking water, and basic supplies to hundreds of families in isolated areas.
 - Unveiled **GodConnects**, a video-based course on Christianity comprised of 12 videos hosted by Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz, Speaker of **The Lutheran Hour**. These video vignettes (each less than 10 minutes) present key biblical concepts in a style ideal for someone new to the Christian faith, while also benefiting long-time Christians. Accompanying these videos are detailed discussion guides that supply supporting Scriptures, pose questions to consider, and provide additional web resources to review. The 12 sessions can be used in new-member classes, by Bible study groups, for individual study, or even as a way to share the faith.
 - Produced several new video Bible studies on a variety of topics (the entire collection now totals 31). These free, downloadable resources each include a discussion guide expanding the video footage with supporting Scripture, commentary, and other features to maximize the topic.
 - Partnered with the Bott Radio Network to place **The Lutheran Hour** into the network's long-running Billy Graham "Hour of Decision" time slot (8 a.m. every Sunday) on Bott's 101 stations in 15 states. This ministry partnership pushes the program's station count to 1,600 throughout North America and its reach to one million listeners per week.
 - Implemented a new weekly segment into **The Lutheran Hour** broadcasts that offer insights into the broader Gospel impact of LHM around the world. Titled "Action in Ministry," this three-to-five-minute segment features interviews with ministry workers who bring into focus the wide variety of ministry strategies, challenges, and successes happening globally.
 - Developed several mobile apps to allow LHM resources to be accessible wherever people go. Apps are now available for **The Lutheran Hour**, **Daily Devotions**, video Bible studies, the **Project Connect** booklet ministry, and LHM events.
 - Received the inaugural J2e3 Award for leadership in mission during the first-ever J2e3 Missions Summit at Concordia Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas, in May 2015.

The Results of God's Blessings:

- By God's grace, LHM's various outreach programs and resources reach more than 51 million people around the world each week with the Gospel;
- LHM distributes 2.5 million print materials annually as part of its outreach efforts;
- **The Lutheran Hour** radio program reaches 1 million listeners per week;
- More than 425,000 copies of our six pocket-sized children booklets have been shipped to congregations and individuals;
- Outreach through LHM's international programs has, by the power of the Holy Spirit, netted nearly 400,000 responses and 41,500 referrals to congregations this past year;
- LHM has trained 111,325 people to witness through its **MISSION U** program in the United States and its more than 30 ministry centers around the world;
- Nearly 80,000 individuals are active donors to LHM;
- More than 42,500 individuals are enrolled annually in **Bible Correspondence Courses** around the world to introduce people to Jesus and biblical principles of our faith;
- More than 21,500 individuals are registered to use the free online resources offered through the **Men's NetWork**; more than 4,600 LCMS and LCC churches are represented among these registered users.

Goals for the Future:

With billions of people still unreached with the Gospel message around the world, our work is not done. Therefore, we will not rest until...

- Every person has the opportunity to hear the Gospel in an understandable way;
- New believers are connected to a faithful Christian community where they can grow in their faith and witness;
- All Christians reach out in love to those who don't yet know the Savior.

We are called to act now! The Lord has given this ministry a unique understanding of how to reach, equip, and minister to individuals. It is crucial that LHM's focus continues to be people who lack the opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ.

Specific Goals for the Next Triennium:

- **Energize, Equip, and Engage Laity for Outreach.**
 - Train individuals/groups of all ages to evangelize to others in their everyday lives.
 - Develop resources lay members can use to address situations in people's lives or answer questions about Christianity and faith.
 - Provide research on how today's culture is evolving and how Christians and congregations can respond to reach their communities with the Gospel.
 - Create a road map of strategies and resources to help congregations connect with the community and follow up with visitors and new believers. This ministry road map will contain the flexibility to be applied at local, regional, and national levels.
- **Grow God's Kingdom through Expanded Media Outreach.**
 - Proclaim Law and Gospel through **The Lutheran Hour** in fresh, compelling ways, while refreshing its format and expanding its reach to a new generation of listeners through additional new initiatives.
 - Incorporate additional resources like smartphone apps, podcasts, and social media as well as expanded exposure through the American Forces Network to take **The Lutheran Hour** to new audiences who can benefit from its life-changing message.
 - Launch a new mass media program. Based on audience research, the format and media platforms will be determined by what will most effectively reach the target audience. This program will serve as a bridge to meet individuals where they are in their faith journey.
- **Bring the Gospel to the Unreached Around the World.**
 - As LHM expands within geographic regions, it will dramatically increase the use of radio and online media, as well as personal and holistic ministries, to reach many more people with the life-transforming news of Jesus Christ.
 - Work in areas where the Gospel is not widespread by focusing on three key emphases:
 1. Unreached people who have little or no possibility of hearing the Gospel.

2. Urban areas, which house large concentrations of unreached people.
 3. The emerging global youth culture, which is identified as another unreached people group.
- **Launch a New Digital Mission Field.**
 - Develop and test optimal web and mobile platforms for reaching targeted audiences with the Gospel. Building on this research, LHM will launch online programming over such platforms as social media, web TV, video streaming, and blogs. With the right message, these programs will potentially reach millions instantly.
 - Create follow-up tools to use and provide to individuals and congregations to stimulate conversations with the unreached. Ultimately this will facilitate more opportunities for connections into Christian communities.
 - Engage the unreached online in three phases:
 1. Initial Contact: Create programs and initiatives such as advertising, viral concepts, and personal referrals that allow for a first contact.
 2. Relationship Building: Develop platforms that provide for in-depth discussion and learning opportunities, including issues segments, an Explore Christianity course, and a Christian Apologetics course.
 3. Real-Time Personal Connections: Take the relationship offline by connecting individuals to Christian communities where their relationships with Christ and church will deepen.

In Conclusion:

Humanity today stands at a crossroads – many have come to believe that they don't need God or doubt His existence. Those without Christ in their lives aren't even aware of the eternal crisis they are facing, but for Christians the dire stakes for these individuals are all too clear.

The need to boldly proclaim the love of Christ is greater than ever ... and the Lord has placed Lutheran Hour Ministries in a unique position to respond. Not only do LHM's media tools and resources help grow and nurture faithful Christians by the power of the Holy Spirit, but they allow the Gospel message to penetrate the expanse of distance, the barriers of prison walls, and the lines of civil unrest or hostile political regimes to reach individuals who have had little or no opportunity to hear the Gospel. They bring a message of forgiveness, love, and hope found only in Jesus Christ to a world that is hurting and hungry for the one thing that is sorely needed.

Lutheran Hour Ministries pledges to continue as a leader in sharing the Gospel through whatever media and technology means are most effective to touch lives for Christ. This ministry will continue to support congregations by offering training and outreach tools for local volunteer evangelism efforts. And we will strive to continue being a leading resource for sound Lutheran programming to support our churches and pastors in their outreach efforts, not only in the United States but throughout the world.

Philip Krauss II, *Chairman*
Kurt Buchholz, *President & CEO*

APPENDIXES TO REPORTS

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I. Opinions of Commission on Constitutional Matters

Regional Board and Vice-President Issues (13-2689)

The Boards for National and International Mission each have ten regional members (Bylaws 3.8.2.2 and 3.8.3.2): “Five laypersons and five individual members of the Synod (one each from each region of the Synod) elected in the same manner as are regional members of the Board of Directors of the Synod (Bylaws 3.12.1 and 3.12.2.5).” Certain members of the Board of Directors are elected according to regions (Bylaw 3.3.4.1), as are vice-presidents two through six (Bylaw 3.12.2.7). Current bylaws provide no instruction regarding whether or how to proceed when a relocation or vacancy occurs in a regional position. The Commission responded to questions from the Secretary of the Synod as follows.

Question 1: In the case of a mission board, the Board of Directors, or vice-presidents two through six of the Synod, when a regionally elected board member or officer relocates to a different region of the Synod during his/her term of office, can this individual finish out his/her term as elected, or must he/she resign because his/her congregational membership is now in another region (Bylaw 3.12.1 [b])?

Opinion: 2010 Resolution 8-14A “To Elect Five Vice-Presidents by Geographic Region” stated in its WHEREAS paragraphs its expectation that the establishment of five geographic regions, “created for representational purposes to improve communications and coordination of functions,” would serve to establish stronger connecting links between the congregations, districts, and the Synod. The Synod would thereby “benefit from improved representation from all areas of the nation.” Specifically, regional vice-presidents would serve as “geographic representatives of the church to improve communications and coordination of functions between the congregations within the geographical regions and the national Synod.” The same expectations were reiterated by Res. 8-16A “To Ensure Regional Representation on the Board of Directors.”

In addition, Bylaw 3.12.1 (b), which speaks of regional elections, states that “individuals will be considered part of the geographic region where their congregational membership is held,” while Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (a) speaks of a member congregation nominating individuals “with residence in its designated region.”

These convention resolutions and bylaw statements indicate that “residence” and “congregational membership” requirements serve representational and other purposes, expectations that cannot be met by regionally elected individuals who relocate outside the region from which they were elected. Therefore, when a regionally elected board member or officer relocates to a different region of the Synod, this member must resign from the officer or board member position.

Question 2: In the case of the mission boards, a number of current board members were elected when region designations were different from what they are at present, so that these board members no longer hold congregational membership in the region from which they were elected. Must mid-term board members who find themselves in different regions than when elected resign their board positions or may they finish out their terms of office?

Opinion: Mid-term board members who have not relocated but who find themselves residing in a designated region other than that of their election because regional designations were changed by the Synod (Bylaw 3.12.1) may finish out their terms of office.

The 2010 elections of mission board members took place under the special circumstances created by Res. 8-15, which resolved that (solely for the 2010 mission board elections) the usual advance designation of regions would be waived. Instead, the Board of Directors and Council of Presidents presented to the convention a regional make-up for the 2010 convention based upon existing regional designations of the Council of Presidents. The elections of mission board members were conducted accordingly.

When due process was followed in preparation for the 2013 convention and regions were determined by taking into consideration “geographical and number of congregations information in the interest of fair representation” (Bylaw 3.12.1), a number of the board members elected by the 2010 convention no longer reside in the regions now designated as the regions they are to represent. Given the unique circumstances of their elections and the clear expectation of the Synod that their terms of office are for six years, the commission opines that they should be allowed to complete their current terms of office. While eligible for a second term, such election by the 2016 convention will require their election as regional board members of the regions of their residence at the time of the election.

Question 3: When a vacancy exists in a regional board position, to be filled by the Board of Directors of the Synod (Bylaw 3.2.5), shall the bylaw requirement that names of nominees be gathered from “the district boards of directors” (Bylaw 3.2.5 [a]) be understood to refer to the boards of directors of only those districts within the region of the vacancy?

Opinion: The nominations process provided by Bylaw 3.12.2.7 allows only member congregations within a given region to participate in the pre-convention nominations process. Similarly Bylaw 3.12.1 (b) limits nominations to individuals of geographical regions where congregational membership is held. These residence and congregational membership requirements necessarily remain the same when vacancies are to be filled. Therefore in the case of vacancies in regional or officer positions, participation by district boards of directors is necessarily limited to districts within the region where the vacancy occurs.

Adopted Dec. 13–14, 2013

Constitutional Questions re Advocacy of Doctrinal Positions Contrary to the Synod’s Stated Positions (13-2694)

In an email dated December 6, 2013, the President of the Synod asked the commission if open and repeated advocacy of theological positions contrary to the Synod’s stated positions were violations of Article II and Article VI 1 of the Synod’s Constitution. He also posed specific questions about the public rejection of “A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles” (1973) and about the filing of formal dissent from such theological positions.

Response of the Commission

Unity of doctrine and practice were primary reasons for the formation of the Synod and are key to its continued existence. This unity is expressed internally as we walk together and externally in witness to those outside the Synod. Subscription to the stated confessional position of the Synod is both a precondition for acquiring membership in the Synod and a requirement of those who wish to continue

to hold membership in the Synod (individuals and congregations) (Constitution Art. II; III 1; XIII 1; Bylaw 1.6.1).

The object of the Synod, as stated in Article III 1 of the Constitution, is (1) to conserve and promote a unity in which all are “united in the same mind and the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10), and (2) to avoid schism caused by contrary doctrine (Rom. 16:17). This purpose of the Synod is defeated when individuals are permitted to teach in accordance with their private views, for then there can be no such thing as a *synodical* position, and a meaningful corporate confessional commitment is impossible. Formal commitment of the Synod to a confessional base is pointless unless the Synod has the right *as a synod* to apply its confessional base definitively to current issues and thus conserve and promote unity and resist an individualism which breeds schism. (1971 Res. 2-21)

The confessional position of the Synod is set forth in Article II of the Constitution:

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.

The Synod, while acknowledging the unique status of the Scriptures (*norma normans*, “the norming norm”) and the Lutheran Confessions (*norma normata*, “normed norm”), also acknowledges that the Confessions are not exhaustive in their confession of biblical doctrine but “speak primarily to the articles of faith in controversy in the days of the Reformation” (Constitution Art. VIII C; 1971 Res. 5-24).

The Synod has retained the right and obligation to reaffirm the confessional position of the Synod in time of controversy, to clarify its witness, to set forth the confessional position of the Synod against new and urgent challenge, and to refute error, as long as such statements are in harmony with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. The Synod does so in line with the confessional principle of the Formula of Concord (FC SD Preface, 4–10), such that in making such resolutions and statements it does not go beyond the confessional basis of Article II of the Constitution, but merely defends its existing confession against new misinterpretations. The Synod holds that its confessional base is “as broad as *Holy Scripture*, and that provided a doctrinal resolution is in fact in harmony with the Word of God, which is ‘the *only* rule and norm of doctrine,’ the content of such a resolution is *intrinsic* to the Synod’s confessional basis” (1971 Res. 2-21).

Some historical examples of Synod stating its position in controverted matters include the adoption of C. F. W. Walther’s theses on church and office (*Kirche und Amt*), the “Thirteen Theses on Predestination,” the “Brief Statement,” and “A Statement on Scriptural and Confessional Principles.” The adoption of the “Thirteen Theses on Predestination” resulted in several members of the Synod leaving because they could not agree with this position of the Synod. The Synod has always expected and required that its members teach and practice in accordance with these resolutions that state its public position regarding the teaching and practice of the Scriptures (1971 Res. 2-21).

The Synod refined the process by introducing a bylaw distinction between doctrinal resolutions and doctrinal statements (1977 Res. 3-07). This change did not in any way alter the authority and status of resolutions establishing the position of the Synod that were adopted prior to this 1977 distinction. These prior resolutions remain what they always were, the official position of the Synod in the matter being covered (1977 Res. 3-07).

Since 1977, the Synod has distinguished between doctrinal resolutions which “may be adopted for the information, counsel, and guidance of the membership” (Bylaw 1.6.2 [a]) and doctrinal statements which “set forth in greater detail the position of Synod especially in controverted matters” (Bylaw 1.6.2 [b]). “[Doctrinal] resolutions come into being in the same manner as any other resolutions of a convention of the Synod and are to be honored and upheld until such time as the Synod amends or repeals them” (Bylaw 1.6.2 [a]). Doctrinal statements have a much more elaborate process of submission, evaluation, refinement, and approval but “shall be regarded as the position of Synod and shall be ‘accepted and used as helpful expositions and explanations’” to be honored and upheld as the standard of teaching and practice “until such time as the Synod amends or repeals them” (Bylaw 1.6.2 [b] [7]). Doctrinal resolutions and statements both have binding force on all congregational and individual members of Synod until it can be shown that such are not in keeping with the Word of God or the Lutheran Confessions, not as an individual judgment but when the Synod in convention by overture is convinced from the Word of God to overturn or amend them (1959 Res. 3-09; 1962 Res. 3-17; 1973 Res. 2-12 and 3-01; 1977 Res 3-07).

The Synod is not infallible and has established a formal dissent process for doctrinal statements when challenge arises (Bylaw section 1.8). Such formal dissent, however, cannot be used as a substitute for the Synod’s stated confessional position and does not permit a member to teach or practice contrary to the position of the Synod. It does not free one from the responsibility to “honor and uphold” doctrinal resolutions or “to abide by, act, and teach in accordance with” doctrinal statements until such time as Synod “amends or repeals them” (Bylaw 1.6.2). This also includes doctrinal positions adopted by the Synod prior to 1977 (cf. CCM Opinion 13-2677). The burden of proof lies upon the dissenter to convince the Synod in convention that it has erred and that a statement is in violation of Synod’s own confessional position. The Bylaws maintain the right of the Synod to interpret its own confessional article (Bylaw 1.6.2 [b]).

Doctrinal resolutions and statements, including positions adopted prior to 1977, do not alter the Synod’s confessional position nor do they add new confessions which must be subscribed. Rather, they elaborate, clarify, set forth in greater detail, and apply that confessional position. As has been true throughout its history, controversy and challenge sharpen the pen for the Synod to clarify its theological position *without* altering the confessional article of its constitution.

Question 1: Is the open and repeated advocacy of theological positions contrary to Synod’s stated positions on (a) the ordination of women or women carrying out the functions of the pastoral office; (b) theistic evolution; (c) the inerrancy and/or the inspiration of the Scriptures; (d) church fellowship; and (e) same-sex relationships violations of Article II and Article VI 1 of the Synod’s Constitution?

Opinion: Yes, open and repeated advocacy of theological positions contrary to the Synod’s stated theological positions is ultimately a challenge to and a violation of the very confessional basis of Synod expressed in Articles II and VI 1 of the Synod’s Constitution, as are all teachings and practices which contradict Scripture and the Confessions. Doctrinal resolutions and statements, including those adopted prior to 1977, have binding force on individual as well as congregational members of Synod. Members of the Synod are required to honor and uphold the stated theological position of Synod, which is defined by the confessional articles of the Constitution and any doctrinal positions adopted by the Synod to amplify, clarify, and apply its theological position in time of question, challenge, and conflict (Bylaw 1.6.2 [a] and [b]). Acting or teaching contrary to such is therefore a rejection of the stated confessional

position of the Synod and ultimately of Article II itself. This does not mean that doctrinal resolutions and statements, including those adopted prior to 1977, are equal to, or that members of the Synod are required to subscribe to them in addition to, the Scriptures and Confessions. Rather, they are adopted *because* they are in harmony with Scripture and the Confessions (Bylaw 1.6.2 [b] [7]).

Question 2: Is the public rejection of “A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles” (1973) a violation of Articles II and VI 1 of Synod’s Constitution?

Opinion: Since “A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles” (1973) was adopted by the Synod (1973 Res. 3-01) “to be Scriptural and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions,” it expresses the doctrinal position of the Synod. It derives its doctrinal authority not from the vote of the convention but from the Word of God, which it sets forth. Public contradiction to “A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles” is, therefore, in essence a violation of Scripture and thus Articles II and VI 1 of the Synod’s Constitution.

With the adoption of “A Statement,” the Synod required “that those who disagree with these formulations in part or in whole be held to present their objections formally to those who have immediate supervision of their doctrine” (1971 Res 5-24). Any dissent from the stated theological position of the Synod is to be brought to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations in accord with Bylaw 1.8.

Question 3: Does the filing of a dissent from such theological positions of the Synod prevent action from being commenced against such a member of the Synod, which may result in removal of such a member of the Synod?

Opinion: While the filing of dissent does not constitute a case for removal, the member is required to teach and practice in accord with Synod’s stated confessional position during the dissent process. If the member fails to honor and uphold the stated confessional position of Synod during the dissent process, the member becomes subject to disciplinary action due both to the violation of the doctrinal position of Synod and the offense against the other members of Synod created by such failure (Constitution Art. XIII 1). In such case it is incumbent upon the ecclesiastical supervisor of the member to exercise disciplinary action against the member who fails to teach and act within Synod’s stated confessional position, whether apart from or during the dissent process (Bylaws 2.14.4; 2.15.4; 2.16.4).

The dissent process only allows a person to bring forth a contrary view to the stated position of Synod which the dissenter believes is supported by the Word of God (Bylaw 1.8.2). Those expressing dissent “are expected as part of the life together within the fellowship of the Synod to honor and uphold the resolutions of the Synod” (Bylaw 1.8.1) and “to honor and uphold publicly the [doctrinal] statement[s] as the position of the Synod ...” (Bylaw 1.6.2 [b] [10]). The CTCR and ultimately the Synod in convention shall consider the dissent and shall render final judgment as to whether or not the doctrinal statement is in accord with the Word of God. While the dissent is being considered by the CTCR or the Synod in convention, “the consciences of others, as well as the collective will of the Synod, shall also be respected” by the dissenter (Bylaw 1.8.2). The individual member does not have the freedom to decide what of Synod’s stated confessional position is to be honored and upheld and what is not. Once the dissent process has been concluded and if the stated confessional position of the Synod is not changed by the Synod in convention, the member is bound to teach and practice in accord with the stated confessional position of the Synod. If the member expressing dissent cannot or will not teach and practice according to the confessional position of the Synod, the only recourse left to the member is to resign from the

Synod. Continuing to teach and practice in conflict with the position of Synod subjects the member to ecclesiastical discipline and finally expulsion from Synod.

Adopted June 13–14, 2014

CUS Presidential Election Process (13-2695)

The chairman of the board of regents of one of the universities of the Concordia University System (CUS) addressed two questions to the commission regarding the process provided by the Bylaws of the Synod for the election of university presidents. The questions pertained to Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 (e), particularly to the status of the list of candidates returned to the board of regents by the prior-approval panel (Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 [d]).

The commission observes that the 2010 Synod convention significantly changed the process for electing presidents of CUS colleges and universities, providing additional directives for that process (Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2). In the resolution that adopted this new procedure (2010 Res. 5-06A), the rationale for the change stated that allowing a board of regents to cast the votes for a college or university president was more in line with the responsibilities that belong to a board of regents. At the same time, the rationale indicated that the new process maintained a legitimate level of participation by the Synod, accomplished by the addition to the process of the prior-approval panel with the authority to remove names from the final “short list” of candidates prepared and submitted by the board of regents.

In this new process, the board of regents, using a search committee, determines the needs of the institution and the characteristics desired in a new president. The search committee also develops written criteria which it uses to screen the list of nominees who have consented to serve if elected. These same criteria are then used by the board of regents to guide the presidential election.

Utilizing the work of the search committee, the board of regents itself then develops a short list of at least five names from the list of all nominees who consented to serve if elected. This short list is then presented to the prior-approval panel consisting of the President of the Synod, the chair of the Board of Directors of Concordia University System, and the president of the district in which the college or university is located.

The prior-approval panel, by a two-thirds vote, may choose to remove names from the short list, which is then returned to the board of regents. If the returned list has less than two names, the election process is terminated and the board of regents must decide whether it will develop a new short list from the current list of nominees who have consented to serve, or whether it will open the nominations process to generate additional nominations before developing a new short list.

The questions now before the commission pertain to that point in the process when the short list is returned to the board of regents by the prior-approval panel (Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 [d] [3]) and the board of regents then elects the new president of the college or university (Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 [e]).

Question 1: When the board of regents creates the ballot of candidates to use on the day of the presidential election, does the board of regents have the authority not to include candidates that received prior approval?

Opinion: No. Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 (e) directs the board of regents to use the slate that was returned by the prior-approval panel and contains no provision for altering the list.

Question 2: Does the board of regents have the authority to stop the process of filling the office of president if it is their determination that stopping would be in the best interest of the institution?

Opinion: No. Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 (e) contains no provision for stopping an election.

Adopted February 28–March 1, 2014

Specific Ministry Pastor Resignation (14-2708)

With a February 19, 2014, email, a district president requested the commission's response to questions prompted by the resignation of a specific ministry pastor (SMP) in his district. The specific ministry pastor resigned his call shortly after his ordination and installation and dropped out of the SMP program for health reasons without completing his final two years of seminary course work. The pastor of the LCMS congregation that the specific ministry pastor now attends has begun involving him in the congregation's pastoral ministry and has expressed interest in his retention on the ordained clergy roster of the Synod. The district president requested the commission's response to the following questions:

Question 1: Is this specific ministry pastor, who has not completed his academic responsibilities, eligible to remain on the roster of the Synod as a pastor emeritus or other candidate status, given the "serious physical and health problems" that prompted his resignation from his former congregation?

Opinion: No, this pastor has not completed the requirements of the SMP program. Although he received and accepted a call and was granted roster status, that status was conditioned on his completing an entire course of study. 2007 Res. 5-01B, which established the SMP program, requires: "Upon call and ordination, the student shall complete the remainder of the Specific Ministry Pastor Program." Likewise, Bylaw 2.13.1 requires specific ministry pastors to have "completed the requirements for service as a specific ministry pastor." Res. 5-01B adds, "Refusal to complete the Specific Ministry Pastor Program would result in the pastor's removal from the Synod roster, at which point he is not eligible for a call."

Question 2: Can this specific ministry pastor be used for Word and Sacrament ministry, including full vestments, in an LCMS congregation?

Opinion: No, since this pastor can no longer continue on the roster of the Synod, he will no longer be qualified to serve a congregation of the Synod. According to Bylaw 2.5.2, "Congregations that are members of the Synod shall call and be served only by ... 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."

Question 3: Does the SMP program provide opportunity for an ordained, installed, and resigned specific ministry pastor to continue the SMP program at a later time?

Opinion: 2007 Res. 5-01B adopted the SMP program "in principle" and authorized the seminaries, the Board for Pastoral Education, and the Council of Presidents "to implement it." 2013 Res. 5-03E specifically charged the Chief Mission Officer and one representative from each seminary, in consultation with the Council of Presidents, to "provide leadership, coordination, and oversight for the Specific Ministry Pastor program." Question 3 should be directed to this committee.

Question 4: Can this specific ministry pastor who has resigned from his assigned congregation after two years of the program now apply for colloquy?

Opinion: No, as a rostered pastor of the Synod removed from the Synod's ordained minister roster, the only option for this pastor to be restored to the roster must be via reinstatement (Bylaw 2.18.1).

Adopted February 28–March 1, 2014

District Convention Delegate Representation (14-2718)

In an email dated May 29, 2014, a district president asked for counsel from the commission regarding a three-congregation arrangement in his district, a "partnership" having been formed to "provide pastoral ministry for the three congregations" and to "pool resources (people)" to assist one with outreach activities, vacation Bible school, etc. The partnership agreement states that one congregation calls the pastor, who in turn provides pastoral care/ministry to the other two congregations, including weekly worship services. The two congregations help to support the calling congregation in return for services provided.

The district president added that each of the congregations in the partnership believes that it is entitled to a lay delegate to the district convention, since the congregations see themselves as unique entities with their own voters assemblies, officers, etc. and since two of the congregations only "contract for pastoral services," with the congregation that called the pastor. This congregation alone would be entitled to send a pastor delegate to the convention.

The district president requested a response to the following:

Question: Do I as district president treat this situation as a multi-congregation parish entitled to one lay voting delegate and one pastor voting delegate at our district convention, or do I treat this situation as three separate congregations with each entitled to one lay voting delegate and with the calling congregation alone sending a pastoral voting delegate to the convention?

Response: The Commission on Constitutional Matters has already provided an extensive response to questions regarding multiple-congregation delegate representation at district conventions (Opinion 11-2618, provided in its entirety below). Although the size and number of congregations involved may differ, the previous opinion's response to the following Question also addresses the above question:

3. A large congregation which does not need the financial support of any other congregation, allows their pastor to provide pulpit supply on Sunday afternoons for a small congregation which cannot afford a full-time pastor. There are no other pastors available in the area.

Opinion: The Question speaks of "pulpit supply." It also speaks of "a small congregation which cannot afford a full-time pastor." Regardless of financial considerations, if the pastor is regarded by the small congregation as its pastor and speaks of him as its pastor, and if he provides Word and Sacrament ministry, ministers to the sick and dying, etc., this and the larger congregation are a dual parish being served by one pastor and, therefore, a parish to be represented at district conventions by the pastor and one lay delegate. Such lay representation will be shared in a manner that presumably is fair and equitable for both congregations.

A summary response that addresses all district convention delegate representation questions is provided earlier in Opinion 11-2618: "[T]he principle stands without exception: Two or more congregations being served by the same pastor constitute a parish with the right of representation by one lay delegate and one pastoral delegate."

83. Congregation Representation at District Conventions (11-2618)

In a letter dated October 14, 2011, a district president inquired regarding exceptions to the standard definition of a "parish" as "two or more congregations served by the same pastor" when representation to the district convention is being determined. In his letter he called attention to an August 30, 1990, opinion of the commission (Ag. 1898 "Pastoral Voting Eligibility") in which a seminary professor was not granted voting privilege on behalf of a nearby congregation although he was serving the congregation on a regular basis. The district president wrote: "Since the CCM declared that a called pastor in one ministry (the seminary) could

do Word and Sacrament ministry in a congregation (Trinity, Worden, Illinois) without a call to that congregation and declared the pastor was 'not in the technical sense the pastor of Trinity, Worden, Illinois,' could the CCM perceive additional situations where a congregation could enter into such an agreement?"

He then offered a series of "situations that might call for additional exceptions" to the definition of a parish and asked, "Can an exception be granted for any of the above or others that you perceive?" and, "Could the current interpretation force large congregations to forbid their pastors from serving small congregations which cannot afford a full-time pastor because they do not want to be recognized by the Synod as being a dual parish?"

The commission notes that the second Question in the foregoing paragraph calls for speculation that is beyond the responsibility of the Commission on Constitutional Matters, which is to "interpret the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions" (Bylaw 3.9.2.2). The commission will, however, provide a response to the first Question in the foregoing paragraph regarding exceptions to the standard definition of a "parish." The commission will then also respond to the questions associated with the series of "situations that might call for additional exceptions" described in the district president's letter.

Question 1: Could the commission perceive of additional situations (other than that addressed in Ag. 1898) where a congregation could enter into such an agreement (one that would not constitute a "parish" situation)?

Response: Article V A of the Constitution of the Synod states: "At the meetings of the districts of the Synod, every congregation or parish is entitled to two votes, one of which is to be cast by the pastor and the other by the lay delegate." This requirement has taken on additional significance as a result of 2010 Res. 8-17 "To Elect the Synod President" and new Bylaw 3.12.2.3, which assign to the voting delegates to district conventions the responsibility to elect the President of the Synod prior to the national conventions.

Questions regarding the definition of the word "parish" were already submitted to the commission as early as 1970, when the *Handbook* of the Synod provided its definition and significance: "If a pastor serves two or more congregations, these shall be regarded as one parish and shall be entitled to only one lay vote" (Bylaw 3.17, 1969 *Handbook*, p. 81). The commission therefore ruled: "[I]n view of the language of the Constitution in Article V, A which speaks of 'every congregation or parish,' the bylaw which states that two or more congregations being served by one pastor shall be regarded as one parish entitled to only one set of delegates is not contrary to the Constitution" (Ag. 181).

At its May 1972 meeting, the commission endorsed the counsel provided by the Secretary of the Synod that only when a congregation that is being served by a pastor "on the side" as a "bonafide vacancy" is that congregation entitled to its own lay delegate. Otherwise, if "it is in reality a dual parish," it is not so entitled (Ag. 305). In a June 1978 opinion the commission further clarified "that it is not necessary to actually participate in the calling of the pastor as long as the congregation is being served by a neighboring pastor in order to be regarded as a dual parish" (Ag. 1275 A, B).

Such has been the commission's consistent response to questions regarding the intention of the word "parish," leading up to 2003 Opinion 03-2327, which referenced a 1985 opinion of the commission (Ag. 1748):

This opinion took into consideration earlier versions of the *Handbook* that had provided a definition of the term "parish," e.g., "If a pastor serves two or more congregations, these shall be regarded as one parish and shall be entitled to only one lay vote" (1963 *Handbook*, Bylaw 3.09). The term therefore refers to a dual or multiple congregation ar-

angement served by the same pastor and is not synonymous with "congregation." As such, two or more congregations served by one pastor share the right of representation by one lay delegate and one pastoral delegate to a district convention.

The August 30, 1990, opinion (Ag. 1898), introduced by the district president requesting this opinion, is no exception to the consistent response of the commission to this question. It offered no exception because the standard principle did not apply in the case being discussed. While the professor in Question was indeed serving as the pastor of the congregation in Question under an agreement reached between him and the congregation, Article V A regarding "parish" representation did not apply due to the fact that his call to the seminary, which made him an advisory member of the Synod, disqualified him from service as a voting delegate of the congregation.

In response to the first Question articulated above, therefore, the principle stands without exception: Two or more congregations being served by the same pastor constitute a parish with the right of representation by one lay delegate and one pastoral delegate. This principle must therefore be applied to each of the circumstances described as follows.

Question 2: 1. A large congregation with a number of associate pastors which allows one of the associate pastors to do ongoing pulpit supply for a small congregation that cannot afford a full-time pastor. Does such action make the small congregation and the large congregation a dual parish with one lay vote and one pastor vote?

Opinion: For the purpose of determining district convention franchise in the Synod, "a parish is defined as a situation in which a pastor serves two or more congregations" in which "it is not necessary to actually participate in the calling of the pastor" in order to be regarded as a dual parish (Ag. 1275 A, B). If the congregations demonstrate the intent to continue in this manner in the foreseeable future, the small and large congregations therefore constitute a dual parish, their lay vote shared in a manner that presumably is fair and equitable for both congregations.

2. A small Spanish speaking congregation that is using the services of an associate pastor of a larger congregation who speaks Spanish. There are no other Spanish speaking pastors available to assist. Does the Spanish speaking congregation lose its own lay delegate at a district convention?

Opinion: In response to the contention that forming a dual parish "deprives one of the congregations of its constitutional right of suffrage," the commission ruled in May, 1972 (Ag. 181) that "in view of the language of the Constitution in Article V A which speaks of 'every congregation or parish,'" the principle that "two or more congregations being served by one pastor shall be regarded as one parish entitled to only one set of delegates" is not contrary to the Constitution and does not cause a congregation to lose its lay delegate representation at a district convention. Rather, it shares its representation with the other congregation(s) in the parish, presumably in a fair and equitable manner.

3. A large congregation which does not need the financial support of any other congregation, allows their pastor to provide pulpit supply on Sunday afternoons for a small congregation which cannot afford a full-time pastor. There are no other pastors available in the area.

Opinion: The Question speaks of "pulpit supply." It also speaks of "a small congregation which cannot afford a full-time pastor." Regardless of financial considerations, if the pastor is regarded by the small congregation as its pastor and speaks of him as its pastor, and if he provides Word and Sacrament ministry, ministers to the sick and dying, etc., this and the larger congregation are a dual parish being served by one pastor and, therefore, a parish to be represented at district conventions by the pastor and one lay delegate.

Such lay representation will be shared in a manner that presumably is fair and equitable for both congregations.

4. Two congregations that are being served by one pastor (the pastor is called to a large congregation which does not need any financial help to support their pastor). The large congregation allows their pastor to provide pulpit supply on Sunday afternoons for the small congregation which cannot afford a full-time pastor, and where no other pastor is available. The large congregation is in one visitation circuit and the small congregation is in a different visitation circuit. Does each congregation have a lay vote at the respective circuit forum in electing (by a voting process) a circuit counselor? If so, how is this different from voting representation at a district convention? Does the small congregation, in effect, have to forfeit its lay vote to the district convention to receive word and sacrament service from the large congregation?

Opinion: This Question again speaks of “pulpit supply” and a “small congregation which cannot afford a full-time pastor.” Again, if the pastor is regarded by the small congregation as its pastor and speaks of him as its pastor, and if he regularly provides Word and Sacrament ministry, ministers to the sick and dying, etc., this and the larger congregation are a dual parish according to the Synod’s definition, entitled to representation at district conventions by the pastor and one lay delegate. The fact that the congregations are in separate visitation circuits has no bearing on the requirement for one pastor and one lay delegate representation at district conventions.

Representation at circuit forums is another matter, such representation determined by Bylaw 5.3.2: “The circuit forum consists of a pastor of each congregation and one member of each congregation designated by the congregation.” In this case, each congregation sends a representative to its own circuit’s forum, the pastor serving as representative to the forum of the circuit of the congregation in which he holds membership.

Regarding whether the small congregation must “forfeit” its lay vote to the district convention in order to receive Word and Sacrament service by the pastor of the large congregation, here again it must be said that a parish arrangement does not cause either congregation to lose its lay delegate representation at a district convention. Rather, the congregations’ representation is shared—presumably through a fair and equitable arrangement.

5. Two congregations that are being served by one pastor in a dual arrangement (both congregations are needed to provide for a full-time pastor) where one congregation is in one district and the other in a different district. Does one congregation have to forfeit their lay vote at their district convention because they are in a dual parish arrangement?

Opinion: 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.

Adopted June 13–14, 2014

Elections of Concordia University System Presidents (14-2720)

By letter dated June 3, 2014, the President of the Synod posed a number of questions to the Commission on Constitutional Matters.

Question 1: Is it permissible according to the Bylaws of the Synod for the board of regents of one of the Synod’s colleges or universities to choose not to elect a president, but instead to create another office (e.g., “CEO” or “leader”) that effectively carries out the functions of the office of president, thereby circumventing the appointed process

for selecting the “spiritual, academic, and administrative head of the institution” (Bylaw 3.10.5.5)?

Opinion: There is no provision within the Synod’s Bylaws which would authorize either the board of regents or the Concordia University System to create a position to replace or serve as substitute for the office of president as this position is set forth in Synod Bylaws 3.10.5.5 through 3.10.5.5.2.

Question 2: If the above Question is answered in the negative, what courses of action are available for that board of regents to correct this situation?

Opinion: There is only one course of action. A board of regents, operating under the provisions of Bylaws 3.10.5ff., is structurally bound by these bylaws and their requirements. Bylaw 3.10.5.5 requires the existence of a president of such an institution and clearly identifies this individual as the executive officer of the board of regents for the institution and identifies the specific duties and responsibilities of the president.

Under the provisions of Synod Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2, a specific process is set forth for the selection of a college/university president. It begins with the board of regents immediately informing the campus constituencies, the Board of Directors of the Concordia University System, the President of the Synod, an official periodical of the Synod, and other parties as appropriate of the vacancy or impending vacancy. It concludes with the board of regents receiving a short list of candidates which, if it contains two or more names, serves as the slate of approved nominees. At this point the board of regents, using this approved slate, “shall elect the president of the college or university.” The board of regents is expected to go through this process in good faith and to follow it to its natural conclusion in a timely fashion. Should the president-elect decline to accept the position, the board of regents is responsible for resuming the effort to fill the vacancy.

Question 3: In light of Bylaw 3.6.1.5 (b) (1)–(2), describing the length of service for interim chief executives of synod-wide corporate entities, would a similar time expectation be reasonable for the board of regents to move forward and elect a permanent president according to the appointed process outlined in the Bylaws?

Opinion: Synod Bylaw 3.6.1.5 (b) (1)–(2) and the timeframes stated therein are not applicable here. This provision is unrelated to the process set forth for filling the vacancy in a college or university president position.

The process in place for the filling in a college or university president position must be followed in good faith and in a timely fashion. Although the bylaws governing this process for filling the vacancy contain no specific timeframes by which each action must be accomplished, the precision by which they set forth the process and the detail indicated therein anticipate that those involved with the same and responsible for the welfare of the institution in Question will act with deliberate speed and with a design to accomplish the result in an efficient and timely manner (see, generally, Bylaw 3.10.5.4 [a], [g]).

In the event that the board of regents does not fill the vacancy, such inaction by the board (either by individual members or the board as a whole) may be sufficient to establish an incapacity to act, a breach of fiduciary responsibility to the Synod or to the institution (or to both), or a neglect or refusal to perform their duties as regents. This may be considered a basis for removal of some or all of the board of regents under the provisions of Bylaws 1.5.7ff. Vacancies created thereby would then be filled under the provisions of Bylaw 3.10.5.3, with the new board of regents having the responsibility to fill the vacancy in the office of president.

Adopted June 13–14, 2014

**Appointment of CUS College and University Regents
(14-2722)**

In a June 7, 2014, emailed letter, a member of a Concordia University System (CUS) board of regents submitted four questions regarding the appointment of members of college and university regents by the boards of regents, also noting differences in the Synod Bylaws between such appointments of seminary regents and appointments of college/university regents.

Question 1: May appointed members of boards of regents of CUS schools vote on additional board appointments?

Opinion: While Bylaw 3.10.4.2 [4] prohibits appointed members of *seminary* boards of regents from voting on the appointment of other members of the board, there is no corresponding prohibition in Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [3], which governs the appointment of additional members by *college and university* boards of regents. Bylaw 3.10.5.3 is to be read as it stands. Appointed members of boards of regents of CUS schools are not prohibited from voting on additional board appointments.

Question 2: May members of boards of regents of CUS schools vote on their own appointment to the board of regents?

Opinion: Nothing in the Bylaws prohibits the casting of such a vote.

Question 3: When does a term of an appointed member begin and end? Does it begin at the moment of the appointment or election and end exactly three years later? Does it begin with the first meeting the member participates in and then end three years later? Or is there some other definition to their term?

Opinion: College and university regents serve for a term of, nominally, three years, from the time of their assumption of office and “until their successors assume office” (Bylaw 3.2.4). With regard to district-elected or board-appointed regents, Bylaw 3.2.4 (c) has not been understood to require such terms to begin and end in the year of the Synod convention, or on any particular fixed date. The requirement that board-appointed regents be appointed in the “non-convention year” was removed by 2007 Res. 5-04 (2007 *Proceedings*, p. 140), leaving the boards of regents to determine when to appoint members for three-year terms, provided there are no fewer than four and no more than eight in service at any time.

A schedule for assumption and relinquishment of office by board-appointed regents, as it is not regulated in the Synod Bylaws, should be set out in the bylaws of the college or university or determined by board policy, so long as it is consistent with the Synod Bylaws’ plain sense of “a three-year term.” Bylaw 3.2.4 (g) does prohibit any appointment to a board of regents in the interim between election of new members by a Synod convention and their assuming office on the following September 1 (cf. CCM Ag. 2125, August 24, 1998).

Question 4: Does a member who is an elected member and then becomes an appointed member have both counted as part of the three term limit or are they counted separately?

Opinion: Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [5] states, “College and university boards 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.” The bylaw does not distinguish between election and appointment for purposes of distinguishing separate term limits. A member, whether elected or appointed to whatever of the terms, may serve no more than nine consecutive years, and a member first appointed to fill a vacancy may serve no more than the length of the vacancy plus six years (if the vacancy was more than a year and a half) or no more than

the length of the vacancy plus nine years (if the vacancy was a year and a half or less). Bylaw 3.2.4 (a) indicates that a board or commission member termed out may become eligible again only after an interval of three or more years (unless returned to the board or commission of necessity in an *ex officio* capacity under Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [4]). An elected seat and an appointed seat on the same board of regents are not different positions, so the allowance of Bylaw 3.2.4.2 (c) does not here apply.

Adopted September 26–27, 2014

Synod as the “Only Sending Agency”—Bylaw 3.8.3 (14-2724)

In a June 19, 2014, letter, the Director of Church Relations/Regional Operations of the Synod submitted a series of five questions to the CCM regarding the interpretation of the final paragraph of Synod Bylaw 3.8.3 and its reference to the Board for International Mission as “the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign areas of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas” (2013 *Handbook*, p. 144).

Recognizing that the questions submitted involve matters of interest to districts and to Synod leadership, the commission shared the questions with all district presidents and appropriate Synod officers (Bylaw 3.9.2.2 [b]) and invited their submission of information regarding the matters at issue. After the questions were discussed at the September 20–22 Council of Presidents meeting, the Director of Church Relations in a September 24 letter withdrew one of the questions as requested during the council’s discussion, leaving four questions for response from the commission.

In a September 25, 2014, emailed letter, the chairman of the Board for International Mission submitted an additional Question for the commission’s consideration: “If a congregation or other synodical entity besides the BIM has issued [a] call, what guidance can the CCM provide in approaching the situation?” This Question will be added as a fifth Question below.

Because the questions beg a historical understanding of the bylaw in Question and request its application to districts, congregations, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations, the commission offers the following considerations before addressing the questions.

A. History of Bylaw 3.8.3

Bylaw 3.8.3 is a reiteration of much of the content of 2007 Bylaw 3.8.8.2.2, which was a compilation of a number of actions taken by the Synod over the years to provide and maintain good order in the area of foreign mission work. As early as 1911, a concern for efficiency and proper channeling prompted the Synod to ask the Saxon churches not to solicit funds individually or on their own authority, but to go through the channels established by the Foreign Mission Board (1911 *Proceedings*, p. 120, as reported in “Synodical Survey Commission Reports Dating from 1959–1962,” Book 1 of 3, p. 49). The Synod also experienced difficulties within its own mission departments, prompting the 1932 convention to create the office of Secretary of Missions, “[t]hat our missions may be conducted in a more uniform and efficient manner” (1932 *Proceedings*, pp. 110–111, *Ibid.*, Book 2 of 3, p. 111).

After the 1979 Synod convention adopted a series of resolutions “to move forward in taking the Gospel overseas,” the 1981 convention adopted Res. 1-05A, “To Go Forward in Overseas Missions,” calling the spread of the Gospel to all the world the “primary mission of the church.” The convention directed the Board for Missions to “continue its efforts to take the Gospel to every open door overseas,” encouraged districts to “increase the percentage of their budget for the Synod,” encouraged congregations to “increase their support of the district and the Synod prayerfully and financially,” and instructed

that districts “consult with the Board for Missions before directly funding a synodical overseas mission” (1981 *Proceedings*, p. 131).

The same 1981 convention greatly expanded the bylaw section governing the Board for Mission Services. Newly adopted Bylaw 2.213 required the Board for Mission Services to “formulate, recommend, review, and supervise the mission policies of the Synod, recommend and monitor budgets, review organizational effectiveness, and provide for an aggressive and united mission effort for the Synod,” as well as to “call, appoint, assign, withdraw, and release missionaries (pastors and teachers) and other workers for the ministries and areas within its direct responsibility, always safeguarding the rights of the partner churches and workers involved” (1981 *Handbook*, p. 66).

Res. 5-37 of the 1983 convention, “To Add Bylaw Paragraph to Board for Mission Services,” inserted a new paragraph “c” into the bylaw adopted two years earlier, instructing that the mission board “[s]erve as the only sending agency through which districts and other entities send at their expense workers to the mission areas of the Synod.” According to the resolution, “[s]ome confusion has existed in the past when districts and other entities have sent missionaries (clergymen, teachers, and others) to foreign mission fields at their expense,” noting that there has been the assumption “that this is to be done through the [Synod’s] Board for Mission Services” (1983 *Proceedings*, p. 195).

When the newly adopted bylaw was incorporated into the 1983 *Handbook*, the new paragraph read: “c. Serve as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the mission areas of the Synod, even though programs are supported by districts and other entities” (p. 69). It is this version that current Bylaw 3.8.3 essentially reiterates, as proposed by the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance and adopted by the 2010 convention. The bylaw’s historical background clarifies the intent of this specific provision of the bylaw, i.e., that for the sake of good order and effectiveness, the Board for International Mission is to serve as the Synod’s only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod.

That this practice may be considered restrictive in the present day was addressed by the 2013 convention, noting that “[d]uring the last 50 years, people’s ideas about mission have changed owing to the ease of global transportation and communication, the affluence of North American society, and the desire of people to have direct and personal contact with a specific mission project” (2013 Res. 1-08 “To Work Together in Mission,” *Proceedings*, p. 103). The convention’s response was twofold:

Resolved, That the Synod, by the next convention, develop and provide a mission best-practices policy document for districts and congregations engaged in mission projects to assist them better to carry out their mission in their life together; And be it further

Resolved, That these best practices include encouragement to districts and congregations to communicate their international mission activities to the Synod’s Director of Church Relations and Offices of National and International Mission for the purposes of healthy coordination and good stewardship.

By not altering the wording or meaning of Bylaw 3.8.3 and instead offering these two resolve paragraphs, the Synod itself has provided input into a proper understanding and application of the bylaw. It continues to stand in principle, and Synod leadership must develop the ways and means for its application today, as God’s people, with their “greater fervor and interest in foreign mission, ... coordinate their resources for maximum effect” and “work in unity as they carry out the Lord’s commission in making disciples of all nations” (2013 *Proceedings*, p. 103).

B. Districts and Foreign Missions

Districts are established by the Synod “in order more effectively to achieve its objectives and carry on its activities” (Bylaw 4.1.1). They are “the Synod itself performing the functions of the Synod” (Bylaw 4.1.1.1). As such, “[t]he Constitution of the Synod is also the constitution of each district; the Bylaws of the Synod shall be primarily the bylaws of the district” (Bylaw 4.1.1.2) and resolutions of the Synod are “binding upon the districts” (Bylaw 4.1.1.1).

Over time, even with the above principles in place, the Synod recognized the need to spell out more clearly its relationship with its districts. 1967 Res. 4-07 (1967 *Proceedings*, p. 105) was adopted upon request of the Commission on Constitutional Matters to clarify further the districts’ relationship to the Synod, the commission itself offering the proposed wording that is now Bylaw 4.1.5 (2013 *Handbook*, p. 188):

4.1.5 Jurisdiction with respect to everything that is administered by or for the entire Synod resides in the national Synod itself. Jurisdiction includes but is not limited to general supervision of doctrine and practice; foreign missions; institutions of the Synod; qualification for ordination, commissioning, and installation of ordained and commissioned ministers and requirements for individual as well as congregational membership in the Synod; publication of official religious periodicals; conduct of negotiations and affiliations with other church bodies; and the like.

Foreign missions is one administrative area that the Synod has, since early on, reserved for itself by decision of its congregations meeting in convention. This does not include non-foreign missions, which take place within and are the business of each district, so long as such administration “always serve[s] the interests of the Synod” (Constitution Art. XII 12). But a district cannot call a pastor or other rostered worker of the Synod to serve in a “foreign area” (defined as “located away from one’s native country” by the *American Collegiate Dictionary*). The commission has already spoken on this subject in its Opinion 11-2607, where it stated in response to a related Question regarding the calling and placement of missionaries outside the district’s own borders: “The principles governing districts of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are contained in Article XII of the Constitution as well as Bylaw 4.1. The Synod itself has retained exclusive jurisdiction with respect to the placement of foreign missionaries (Bylaws 4.4.3 [b], 4.1.5, and 3.8.3)” (CCM November 11–13, 2011 Minutes).

C. Congregations and Foreign Missions

“Congregations, the basic units of the Synod, have joined together to form the Synod and relate to one another through it” (Bylaw 1.3.1). “Committed to a common confession and mission,” congregations “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).

In its report to the 1981 Synod convention, Task Force II specifically identified the two basic reasons for which the Synod was called into being, these two basic functions guiding the Synod in its restructuring at that time:

1. *In support of the congregations.* The Synod was designed to help the congregations and their members to preserve the purity of God’s Word and to assist the congregations in their mission and ministry right where they are. Through the years the Synod has therefore provided many tools and helps in education, evangelism, stewardship, and other phases of congregational life and ministry.
2. *In behalf of the congregations.* In this respect the Synod has reached out to other church bodies either to establish or to maintain unity of confession and in that way to carry out the Scriptural directive to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The Synod has also served in behalf of the congregations by enabling congregations to do together that which individual congregations could not do by themselves or

could not do very well, such as foreign mission work and the training of pastors and teachers at colleges and seminaries.

That identification of the two basic functions of the Synod is closely reflected in paragraphs (a) and (b) of current Bylaw 1.1.1 (2013 *Handbook*, p. 23):

- (a) The Synod functions in support of its member congregations by providing assistance as congregations conduct their ministries locally, as well as their ministries at large.
- (b) The Synod on behalf of its member congregations administers those ministries that can be accomplished more effectively in association with other member congregations through the Synod. In this way member congregations utilize the Synod to assist them in carrying out their functions of worship, witness, teaching and nurture, service, and support.

Constitution Art. VII makes clear, however, that the Synod also respects its member congregations' right to self-govern (2013 *Handbook*, p. 16):

1. In its relations 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.

At the same time, member congregations by their adoption of other constitutional articles and by their present-day subscription to such articles self-limit their right of self-government. By establishing the requirements of membership in the Synod (Constitution Art. VI), they "obligate themselves to fulfill such requirements and to diligently and earnestly promote the purposes of the Synod by word and deed." They also agree to uphold the Synod's confessional position (Constitution Art. II) and to carry out the objectives of the Synod (Constitution Art. III), "which are objectives of the members themselves" (Bylaw 1.3.4).

This self-limitation carries over to the Bylaws, which according to Constitution Art. XIV are "binding regulations for the Synod and its conduct and governance" (2013 *Handbook*, p. 22), including Bylaw 1.3.4.1 (p. 27):

- 1.3.4.1 Thus, 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.

This self-limitation has been further extended by convention action to the resolutions of the Synod, as articulated in Bylaw section 1.7 "Agreements" (2013 *Handbook*, p. 36):

- 1.7.1 The Constitution, Bylaws, and all other rules and regulations of the Synod apply to all congregational and individual members of the Synod.
- 1.7.2 The Synod expects every member congregation of the Synod to respect its resolutions and to consider them of binding force if they are in accordance with the Word of God and if they appear applicable as far as the condition of the congregation is concerned. The Synod, being an advisory body, recognizes the right of a congregation to be the judge of the applicability of the resolution to its local condition. However, in exercising such judgment, a congregation must not act arbitrarily, but in accordance with the principles of Christian love and charity.
- 1.7.3 The Synod expects congregations that have not been received into membership, but are served by the Synod, and whose ministers of religion, ordained and commissioned, hold membership in the Synod, to honor its rules and regulations.

Accordingly, congregations submit to requirements for membership (Bylaw section 2.1), agree to use the Synod's dispute resolution process to resolve most disputes (Bylaw section 1.10), honor the Synod's requirements and restrictions for calling ministers of religion (Bylaw section 2.5), accept their district president's ecclesiastical supervision (Bylaw 2.12.1), etc. Member congregations also submit to the Synod's expectations with regard to foreign mission work as delineated in Bylaw 3.8.3.

Such interest in the coordination of mission activity was demonstrated with the adoption of 2010 Res. 1-07A "To Encourage Inter-District Dialogue in the Establishment of New Church Starts, Satellite Worship Sites, and Specialized Ministries across Geographic District Lines" (2010 *Proceedings*, p. 106). Here, addressing a matter of national mission, the Synod addressed congregations and districts regarding local mission efforts, noting that failure to coordinate mission efforts "can cause strained relations and impact work that is being planned for that area by local congregations or the geographical district." With the adoption of the resolution by a 875 to 169 vote, the Synod

... *Resolved*, That congregations interested in expanding their Gospel outreach into an area that crosses district lines be encouraged to discuss their intent first with their own district officials, followed by the appropriate district officials and the local congregations impacted by such work; and be it further

Resolved, That any such expansion of Gospel outreach across district lines shall require the concurrence of both the president of the receiving geographical district and the board or committee responsible for mission in that district. ...

Similar issues surface if congregations take upon themselves the responsibility for calling and/or sending mission workers and/or funding to foreign mission areas. Proper supervision (Bylaw 1.2.1 [i] and [t], 2013 *Handbook*, pp. 24, 25) may not be possible. Relationships with partner and other church bodies, the responsibility of the President of the Synod (Bylaw 3.3.1.1.2, *Handbook*, p. 117)), are likely to be impacted by the presence of church workers in foreign mission areas known to be associated with the Synod.

In summary, while congregational self-governance is an essential principle for the Synod, the congregations of the Synod have through their convention actions and membership in the Synod limited some of their independence and freedoms in the interest of working together, including the limitations articulated in current Bylaw 3.8.3.

D. Auxiliaries and Foreign Missions

Auxiliaries are not agencies of the Synod or part of its constitutional structure. The Synod's two auxiliaries, the International Lutheran Laymen's League and the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, relate to the Synod according to the specific set of bylaws provided in Synod Bylaw section 6.1 (2013 *Handbook*, pp. 201–203).

While independent of the Synod and its organization and administration, auxiliaries are required to "operate with freedom and self-determination as a ministry ... while complying with the responsibilities" outlined (Bylaw 6.1.2 [c]). Such responsibilities include "coordinat[ing] plans and programs with those of the Synod through regular sharing and contact" (Bylaw 6.1.2 [d]). They are to report annually to the President of the Synod, provide an annual program report to the Synod, keep the Synod advised of any new program under consideration, honor and uphold the doctrine and practice of the Synod, and, while operating with freedom and self-determination in their mission independent of control by the Synod, respect protocol documents that exist between the Synod and her partner churches (Bylaw 6.1.3).

Therefore, because of their independence from the Synod in organization and administration, Bylaw 3.8.3 is not binding on auxiliaries. At the same time, while they are operating with freedom and self-determination, their bylaw responsibilities to the Synod offer ample opportunity and expectation for coordination with the Synod's foreign mission efforts, especially when partner churches are involved or affected.

E. Recognized Service Organizations and Foreign Missions

A service organization is granted recognized status by the Synod when its mission and ministry are recognized by the Synod to "foster the mission and ministry of the church" (Bylaw 6.2.1). As such, a recognized service organization operates with freedom and self-determination as a ministry organization entirely independent of the Synod and its districts and its member congregations (Bylaw 6.2.1 [a]) and independent of control by the Synod (Bylaw 6.2.1 [b]). A recognized service organization continues to qualify for this status so long as it "engages in program activity that is in harmony with the programs of the boards of the Synod, and respects and does not act contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod" (2013 *Handbook*, pp. 203–204).

Therefore Bylaw 3.8.3 does not apply to recognized service organizations *per se*. However, continued recognized status hinges on "engag[ing] in program activity that is in harmony with the programs of the boards of the Synod" (Bylaw 6.2.1), including the programs of the Office of International Mission as determined by policy established by the Board for International Mission "for the coordination of and in support of ministries of the Synod in foreign countries" (Bylaw 3.8.3.1).

Response to Questions

Question 1: Can/May a district, congregation, RSO, or auxiliary of the Synod call a pastor or other rostered worker of the Synod for the purpose of that worker serving in "foreign areas"?

Opinion: Foreign missions is a jurisdiction that the Synod has retained for itself (Bylaw 4.1.5). Districts and congregations may not call rostered church workers for service in foreign areas, as supported throughout the Bylaws of the Synod (e.g., Bylaws 2.11.1 [a] and [g]; 2.12.1.4; 4.4.3 [b]). If it is an area so designated by the Board for International Mission (Bylaw 3.1.4.3), interest in supporting a worker must be coordinated with the Office of International Mission. While auxiliaries and recognized service organizations are independent of the Synod's control, requirements for their relationships to the Synod and its agencies make clear the expectation that communication and coordination will take place to make certain that foreign mission activities, including the calling of rostered workers, will "aid the Synod" (Bylaw 6.1.1) and are "in harmony with the programs of the boards of the Synod" (Bylaw 6.2.1) and respect protocol documents (Bylaws 3.3.1.1.2; 6.1.3 [g]; 6.2.1 [d]) and other agreements.

Question 2: Can/May a district, congregation, RSO, or auxiliary of the Synod call a pastor or other rostered worker of the Synod for the purposes of "lending" him to another entity, RSO, or agency of the Synod, or to a mission society not affiliated officially with the Synod (a private IRS 501 (c) (3) mission society) with the expressed purpose of having that called worker serve in "foreign areas"?

Opinion: In addition to a number of theological and practical concerns likely associated with such practice as described, calling a pastor or other rostered worker in order to "lend" him/her to another agency or entity for service in a foreign area is tantamount to

extending the call for the worker to serve in a mission field and is not appropriate for reasons given in sections (B)–(E) above.

Question 3: Can/May a district, congregation, RSO, or auxiliary of the Synod send funds to a mission society or other non-Synod entity for the purpose of doing work in "foreign areas"?

Opinion: Districts may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for doing work in foreign areas except through the Board for International Mission.

In keeping with "[o]ur Lord's will that the diversity of gifts should be for the common profit. 1 Cor. 12:4–31" (Constitution Preamble), congregations may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for work in foreign areas without taking into consideration policies developed and determined for this purpose by the Board of International Mission as the only sending agency. Such policies must honor the principle of congregational autonomy. They must also take into consideration Constitution Article III, which articulates the Synod's obligations and objectives toward its congregations, and Constitution Article VI 2 c, which requires as a condition of membership in the Synod the renunciation of unionistic and syncretistic practices such as "[p]articipating in heterodox tract and missionary activities" (2013 *Handbook*, p. 15).

Auxiliaries, whose members are often members of the Synod, will of necessity be sensitive to this constitutional expectation as well. And recognized service organizations will take care that their program activities respect and are not contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod.

Question 4: Can/May a district, congregation, RSO, or auxiliary of the Synod determine on its own, without consultation with the Synod, what is or is not a "foreign area" of the Synod's mission work?

Opinion: The Bylaws of the Synod assume that such determination belongs to the Synod's Board for International Mission (Bylaw 3.1.4.3) and not districts and congregations. Auxiliaries and recognized service organizations will do well to honor the Synod's "foreign mission area" designations as well, in light of their supportive and cooperative relationships with the Synod.

Question 5: If a congregation or other synodical entity besides the BIM has issued [a] call, what guidance can the CCM provide in approaching the situation?

Opinion: Situations where the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod have not been properly followed require evangelical attention by those whose responsibility it is to see to it that the decisions and principles of the Synod are honored and carried out (Constitution Art. XI B; XII 7, 9; Bylaws 1.2.1 [i]; 3.3.1.1.1; 3.3.1.2; 4.4.2; *et al.*). For its part, the Board for International Mission (and the Office of International Mission) will also want to cooperate with and facilitate efforts and remedies that will honor Bylaw 3.8.3 while also honoring "the desire of people to have direct and personal contact with a specific mission project" (2013 Res. 1-08 "To Work Together in Mission," *Proceedings*, p. 103).

September 26–27, 2014

Realignment of Visitation Circuits (14-2734)

With an August 20, 2014, memorandum, officers of the Mid-South District submitted three questions regarding the realignment of visitation circuits. The commission responded as follows.

Question 1: Did amendment of Synod Bylaw 3.1.2 (a) by the 2013 Synod convention authorize district boards of directors to create or realign adjacent visitation circuits by determining their makeup to allow for the requirements

matching that of an electoral circuit as well as geographical criteria (Bylaw 5.1.2)?

Opinion: No. Synod Bylaw 3.1.2 (a) as it stood in the 2010 *Handbook* of the Synod read as follows:

- (a) An electoral circuit shall consist either of one or 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. *[emphasis added]*

As changed by the Synod's 2013 convention, Bylaw 3.1.2 (a) now reads:

- (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 to 10,000. *[emphasis added to show the language changed]*

Although this now places responsibility for creation of electoral circuits upon the district boards of directors, it does not speak to realignment, change, or creation of visitation circuits. The methods and manner by which visitation circuits may be accomplished remains the same as it was prior to the 2013 convention.

Question 2: Does "as shall be determined by the district board of directors" refer only to the creation of an electoral circuit by a district board of directors determining which two previously established adjacent geographic visitation circuits shall be combined?

Opinion: Yes. As indicated in the response to Question 1, there was no action taken by the Synod in convention that altered the manner by which realignment of visitation circuits may be accomplished. The referenced bylaw concerns only the creation of electoral circuits, which is accomplished by the district board of directors adjoining existing visitation circuits.

Question 3: In accordance with the answer(s) given by the CCM concerning these questions, what would be the proper procedure for a district or district board of directors to follow to alter, add, or adjoin visitation circuits to meet the bylaw requirements of an electoral circuit?

Opinion: Visitation circuits and their development are defined in the following bylaws:

- 5.1.1 A circuit is a network of congregations that "walks together" for mutual care, support, advice, study, ecclesiastical encouragement, service, coordination, resources, and counsel—all for the sake of greater congregational participation in God's mission.
- 5.1.2 Districts shall establish circuits according to geographical criteria.

There is nothing to prevent a district board of directors from acting on its own motion to realign visitation circuits if the board has been authorized to do so by its district's bylaws (see CCM Opinions Ag. 1751 A, B "District Board of Director's Authority," September 26–27, 1986; and 03-2368 "Role of District Board of Directors in the Configuration of Visitation Circuits," September 30, 2003). As the commission noted in its February 8–9, 1974, opinion Ag. 500 and reaffirmed in the 03-2368 opinion above, "a district convention should realign circuits or at least specifically authorize the [district's] board of directors to take certain actions in connection with such realignment." Without specific bylaw authority granted to the district board of directors or a specific resolution by the district convention authorizing this to be done, the district convention is the entity to act in this regard.

Following any realignment of visitation circuits in the foregoing fashion, it is then the responsibility of the district board of directors

to configure electoral circuits, using then-existing visitation circuits and pursuant to the provisions of Synod Bylaw 3.1.2 (a).

Adopted September 26–27, 2014

Concordia University System Faculty Employment Issues **(14-2737)**

In an August 30, 2014, email, a faculty member of Concordia University Wisconsin submitted a series of questions regarding faculty employment issues, noting that pertinent sections in the 2013 *Handbook* of the Synod underwent significant revisions intended to allow boards of regents to "govern more effectively" (2013 Res. 5-06A).

In place of detailed bylaws governing faculty appointments, employment contracts, contract renewal, contract termination, faculty organization, modified service, sabbaticals, and dispute resolution, Res. 5-06A required that the Concordia University System "maintain in its policies a list of subject matters that each college and university board of regents will address in its own faculty policies." Each board of regents is to "ensure that its institutional handbook set[s] appropriate policies regarding faculty matters" (2013 *Proceedings*, p. 145).

The following bylaw paragraphs remain under the "Concordia University System Faculties" section of the Synod's 2013 *Handbook*:

- 3.10.5.6 The faculty of each college or university of the Synod shall consist of the president, the full-time faculty, and the part-time faculty.
- 3.10.5.6.1 Each educational institution shall state policies and procedures related to faculty appointments, employment contracts, contract renewal, contract termination, faculty organization, modified service, sabbaticals, and dispute resolution within the Concordia University System's *Standard Operating Procedures Manual for Dispute Resolution*.
- 3.10.5.6.2 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.
- 3.10.5.6.3 A formal procedure shall be in place to carry out performance reviews for all faculty on a regular basis.
- 3.10.5.6.4 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

3.10.5.6.4.1 A faculty 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.

3.10.5.6.4.2 An appeal process following Concordia University System's *Standard Operating Procedures Manual for Dispute Resolution* shall be in place for use by faculty members who wish to challenge a termination decision.

Question 1: LCMS universities have various categories of faculty. To which faculty does section 3.10.5.6.4 of the 2013 LCMS *Handbook* apply?

Opinion: Bylaw 3.10.5.6.4 makes no distinction between “categories of faculty” other than full-time and part-time. Its provisions, therefore, apply to all faculty members.

Question 2: Does “termination of faculty employment” in the 2013 LCMS *Handbook* include refusing to renew a faculty contract after it has expired, as well as firing a faculty member during the term of a contract?

Opinion: Bylaw 3.10.5.6.4 excludes only “honorable retirement” from its application. The provisions of the bylaw certainly apply when “firing a faculty member during the term of a contract.” However, preceding bylaw paragraphs clearly anticipate that contracts or other such documents will have a stated duration. After a faculty contract has expired, employment is ended and Bylaw 3.10.5.6.4 no longer applies unless/until the contract is renewed.

Question 3: If, for the purpose of limiting the university’s responsibility toward faculty employment to the number of years specified in faculty contracts, the policy of 2013 LCMS *Handbook* 3.10.5.6.4 is modified to add the words in italics, “Other than honorable retirement, termination of faculty employment *within a faculty contract* may only be the result of the following ...” is the modified policy in agreement with the LCMS *Handbook* policy, or does the modified policy unduly restrict the protection granted to faculty by the LCMS *Handbook* policy?

Opinion: The *Handbook* of the Synod is not a policy manual. It contains the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod. Accordingly, combining bylaw wording and policy wording by inserting additional wording into what is essentially a quotation of a bylaw of the Synod may be confusing. That being said, however, the wording in Question does not contradict or unduly restrict the protection granted to faculty by Bylaw 3.10.5.6.4. As opined in the commission’s response to Question 2 above, refusal to renew a faculty contract does not fall under Bylaw 3.10.5.6.4 and its requirements for termination of faculty employment.

Question 4: If “termination of faculty employment” in the 2013 LCMS *Handbook* does not include refusing to renew a faculty contract, then could a university legitimately have a policy to issue its faculty roll-over contracts on a daily basis without violating the LCMS *Handbook*? “Roll-over contracts on a daily basis” here means contracts that have a duration of one day, but automatically reset the ending date of the contract ahead by one day at the conclusion of the previous day, unless administrative action is taken to stop the roll-over contract. Such a contract would allow the university to refuse to renew a

faculty contract “at will” without having to show legitimate cause, if “termination of faculty employment” does not include a refusal to renew a faculty contract.

Opinion: Since roll-over contracts are not addressed in the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod, this Question is beyond the purview of the commission.

Question 5: If it would not be legitimate for a university to issue faculty roll-over contracts on a daily basis, is there any minimum time duration required for roll-over contracts, after which the university could refuse to renew a faculty contract without having to show legitimate cause?

Opinion: See the answer to Question 4.

Question 6: If it is legitimate for universities to issue faculty roll-over contracts with some minimum time duration specified in the contract, should any distinction be made between contracts issued to faculty with divine calls as commissioned or ordained ministers, and to faculty without divine calls? According to a CTCR report, Mörlin, with Walther’s approval, “rejects the argument of those who insist that since they pay the pastor’s salary, they can hire and fire him at will, thus treating ‘the call of the preacher as nothing other than a contract of the kind made with a cow- or sow-herder.’ ... On the basis of the divine nature of the call itself Walther argued against the idea of a temporary call. The very idea that a divine call could be issued for a set number of years was a contradiction in terms. Since God is the one who issues the call, it is also God who terminates a person’s service in a particular location, and this for one of two reasons. First, God issues another call to that person to serve elsewhere. Second, God removes the individual altogether from the office due to the false teaching or immoral life of the one who holds it” (*Theology and Practice of “the Divine Call,”* A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod).

Opinion: While this is an issue that is not addressed *per se* in the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod, special considerations are involved when contracts issued to faculty include divine calls. While the commission is responsible for reviewing such policies when developed, questions regarding the divine nature of the call are best directed to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations or to the Synod in convention.

Question 7: Given the determination by the CTCR that calls normally should not be temporary, when universities issue contracts to commissioned or ordained ministers of religion, should those contracts include an ending date?

Opinion: Commission on Theology and Church Relations reports do not determine the practice of the Synod. The practice of the Synod is determined by its Constitution and Bylaws where, for example, university presidents serve five-year renewable terms of office (Bylaw 3.10.5.5.1).

Question 8: Given the protection from termination of faculty employment in the 2013 LCMS *Handbook*, is it legitimate for a university to state as its employment policy that junior faculty “may be terminated during the contract period for cause, and at the end of the contract period without disclosure of cause” (CUS Faculty Handbook, July 1, 2014, p. 42)?

Opinion: Each educational institution is required to “state policies and procedures related to faculty appointments, employment

contracts, contract renewal, contract termination,” etc. (Bylaw 3.10.5.6.1). It is therefore legitimate for a university to state its employment policies.

Question 9: Given the protection from termination of faculty employment in the 2013 LCMS *Handbook*, is it legitimate for a university to state as its employment policy that senior faculty “may be terminated during the contract period only for cause. Senior faculty members who do not meet the university’s expectations for teaching, scholarship, and/or service may be placed on a Plan for Improvement (PFI); such faculty may have their contract roll-over stopped until they are able to demonstrate that they meet university expectations commensurate with their rank. Failure to meet the stated expectations in the plan shall normally result in dismissal from the university” (CUW Faculty Handbook, July 1, 2014, pg. 42)? Notice that the standard applied for termination “during the contract period” is only “for cause,” while the standard for stopping the contract roll-over and eventually dismissing the senior faculty member invokes language different from the LCMS *Handbook* definition of cause, specifically “university expectations commensurate with their rank.”

Opinion: The current Bylaws of the Synod do not speak of distinctions between faculty members of Concordia University System schools other than full-time and part-time faculty (Bylaw 3.10.5.6). But as noted in the commission’s response to Question 8, each educational institution must “state policies and procedures related to faculty appointments, employment contracts, contract renewal, contract termination,” etc. (Bylaw 3.10.5.6.1), which policies could include such provisions as provided in this Question so long as they do not contradict the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod.

Question 10: Since *tenure* is commonly used to mean “a senior academic’s contractual right not to have his or her position terminated without just cause” (*Wikipedia*, sub voc., accessed 7/10/2014), and since the 2013 LCMS *Handbook* grants university faculty the right not to have their positions terminated without just cause, is it legitimate for a university to state in its handbook that it does not offer tenure (CUW Faculty Handbook, July 1, 2014, pg. 42)?

Opinion: Tenure is no longer mentioned in the Bylaws of the Synod that govern Concordia University System schools and faculties. So long as educational institutions “state policies and procedures related to faculty appointments, employment contracts, contract renewal, contract termination,” etc. (Bylaw 3.10.5.6.1) and 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” (Bylaw 3.10.5.6.2), the use (or not) of the term “tenure” is not an issue.

Adopted September 26–27, 2014

Ecclesiastical Supervision Responsibilities of the President of the Synod (15-2750)

Via a February 2, 2015, email, a district president submitted three questions pertaining to the responsibilities of the President of the Synod in the exercise of ecclesiastical supervision of individual members of the Synod.

Bylaw 1.2.1 (i) states in part:

- (i) ***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. 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. [italics added]

Bylaw 1.2.1 (I) states, as it defines “member of the Synod”:

- (I) ***Member of the Synod:*** See Constitution Art. V. Members of the Synod are of two classes: corporate members (congregations that have joined the Synod) and individual members (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned on the roster of the Synod).

Question 1: Since Bylaw 1.2.1 (i) states that ecclesiastical supervision rests primarily with “the President of Synod and district presidents,” does the President of the Synod have the responsibility, when necessary, to discipline members of the Synod as a district president disciplines members of the Synod?

Opinion: This definition alone does not define the roles of the President of Synod and the relevant district president in a case of discipline (expulsion), as the remainder of the definition (1.2.1[i]) indicates. Constitution Art. XIII 2 states: “Expulsion shall be executed only after following such procedure as shall be set forth in the Bylaws of the Synod.” Such procedure is set forth, as applies to members of the Synod under district supervision, in Bylaw sections 2.14 and 2.17. This procedure, while of an obligatory as opposed to a discretionary nature, is to be carried out by the respective district presidents: “[T]he district president of the accused *shall* commence the following action when he becomes aware of information or allegations that could lead to expulsion of a member from Synod” (Bylaw 2.14.4, emphasis added; see also Bylaw 4.4.5 and Constitution Art. XII 7). In doing so, the district president is responsible to and reports to the President of Synod (Constitution Art. XII 9 b) as the chief ecclesiastical supervisor of doctrine and practice (Bylaw 3.3.1.1; Constitution Art. XI B 1).

The district president thus carries out within his district the charge assigned principally to the President of the Synod as the “chief ecclesiastical officer of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.3.1.1), who is to “conscientiously use all the means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” (Constitution Art. XI B 3). “In the districts of the Synod, [the President of Synod] shall carry out *his* ecclesiastical duties *through* the district’s president” (Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 [b], emphasis added).

The President of Synod, who “has the supervision regarding the doctrine and the administration of (a) all officers of the Synod; (b) all such as are employed by the Synod; (c) the individual districts of the Synod; (d) all district presidents” (Const. Art. XI B 1; see also paragraphs 2, 3, and 4), has broad responsibility and authority to supervise (in the sense of ecclesiastical supervision [Bylaw 1.2.1(i)]) and to oversee (Bylaws 3.3.1.2; 3.3.1.2 [b]; 1.2.1[o]) the activity of his district presidents in this regard (see Bylaws 3.3.1, 3.3.1.1, 3.3.1.2 [c]) and, ultimately, to “see to it that [district presidents] 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. The President has and always shall have the power to advise, admonish, and reprove. ...” (Const. Art. XI B 2–3; see also Bylaw 3.3.1.2 [b]–[c]).

In response, therefore, to the Question asked, the President of the Synod exercises his authority to supervise doctrine and practice in the districts of the Synod as the Constitution (Art. XII 8) and Bylaws (2.14, etc.) specify, namely, through his supervision of district presi-

dents. “In the districts of the Synod, [the President of the Synod] *shall* carry out *his* ecclesiastical duties *through* the district’s president” (Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 [b], emphasis added).

Question 2: May the President of the Synod, following the parameters of Bylaw 2.13.2 (Restricted Status and Limitations), along with Bylaw 2.13.3 (Removal of Restricted Status and Limitations) and Bylaw 2.13.4 (Suspended Status and Limitation), discipline a member of Synod?

Opinion: Only the district president having ecclesiastical supervision of an individual member (not the President of the Synod) may impose restricted status (Bylaw 2.13.2). Suspended status is imposed only in connection with the expulsion procedures delineated in Bylaw sections 2.14–2.17 (Bylaw 2.13.4; Constitution Art. XIII 2). Bylaws 2.13.2–2.13.4 grant the President of the Synod no authority to impose suspended status apart from the authority granted him under Bylaws 2.15.1 and 2.17.1 to suspend those under his direct ecclesiastical supervision (district presidents and officers of the Synod).

Question 3: May the President of the Synod, following Bylaw 2.14 (Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod), seek to terminate the membership of a member of the Synod in accord with Article XIII (Expulsion from the Synod)?

Opinion: There is no provision in the Bylaws of the Synod for the President of the Synod to assume the responsibility of the district president of the accused to commence the Bylaw section 2.14 process. “The action to commence expulsion of a congregation or individual from membership of the Synod is the sole responsibility of the district president who has the responsibility for ecclesiastical supervision of such member” (Bylaw 2.14.1 [b]).

Adopted September 18–19, 2015

Application of Synod Convention Bylaws to District Conventions (15-2755)

On March 2, the Secretary of Synod, in response to inquiries prompted by upcoming district conventions, posed a series of questions regarding Bylaw 4.2.1 (a) and its application of Synod convention bylaws to district conventions.

Background

While districts share the Synod’s Constitution (Constitution Art. XII 2) and Bylaws (Bylaw 4.1.1.2), each district “is at liberty to adopt such bylaws and pass such resolutions as it deems expedient for its conditions, provided that such bylaws and resolutions do not conflict with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod” (Constitution Art. XII 2). Bylaw 4.2.1 (a) and (e) apply this principle to regulations for district conventions. (These paragraphs originally read consecutively [1949 *Handbook*, p. 55] until separated by the insertion of paragraphs [b]–[d] by the 2010 convention.) Bylaw 4.7.1 applies this principle in a distinct manner to regulations for district nominations and elections.

Thus there are four distinct modes in which the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod regulate district conventions, nominations, and elections:

- (a) Where the Constitution or Synod Bylaws deal directly with district conventions, nominations, or elections, these shall govern. Districts are not at liberty to adopt conflicting regulations.
- (b) Where the Constitution deals with Synod convention, Synod nominations, or Synod elections (and does not elsewhere deal directly with the same matters regarding a district), it shall govern (e.g., Constitution Art. VIII C). Districts share the Synod’s Constitution (Constitution Art. XII 2). Districts are not at liberty to adopt conflicting regulations.
- (c) Where Synod Bylaws deal with the Synod convention (and do not elsewhere deal directly with the same matters regarding a district), they shall govern “insofar as these may be applicable” (Bylaw 4.2.1 [a]), *but* districts “may adopt other regulations, provided these are not contrary to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod” (Bylaw 4.2.1 [e]).
Districts are not at liberty to adopt regulations conflicting with Synod’s Constitution and Bylaws (Constitution Art. XII 2; Bylaws 4.1.1.2; 4.2.1 [e]). Nor are they at liberty to render an authoritative interpretation of whether or not Synod’s Bylaws are “applicable.” That authority rests with the Synod and its Commission on Constitutional Matters.
At the same time, the language of Bylaw 4.2.1 (e), “may adopt *other* regulations,” suggests that district convention procedures may vary, to a limited degree, from the Synod’s convention procedures, even where, in the absence of district bylaws, the Synod’s convention bylaws would govern by default.
It is impossible to provide a concise evaluation of what degree of variation might be allowable in every given circumstance. The commission’s review of district regulations and their amendment (Bylaws 3.9.2.2.3; 4.1.1.2 [b]) serves this purpose. In the precedent, the phrase “insofar as these may be applicable” (Bylaw 4.2.1[a]) has consistently been interpreted expansively, to mean, “wherever such bylaws deal with structures or procedures that exist (or should exist) on the district, as well as on the Synod, level.” See CCM Ag. 02–2229 (regarding Bylaw 3.1.2.1 [d]), 09–2574 (Bylaw 3.1.6 [a]), 06–2485 (Bylaw 3.1.6.1), 02–2281 (Bylaw 3.1.6.2), 10–2577 (Bylaw 3.1.6.2 [c]), 14–2705 (Bylaw 3.1.8 [b]).
- (d) Where the Synod’s Bylaws deal with the Synod’s nominations and elections (and do not elsewhere deal directly with the same matters regarding a district), Synod Bylaws shall by default govern “insofar as these may be applicable” (see above). However, Synod Bylaw 4.7.1 allows each district “to 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, so long as these provisions do not conflict with the Bylaws of the Synod.”
These may to a limited extent provide *different procedures* for the district than exist on the Synod level, without conflicting with the Constitution or Bylaws of Synod, because Synod Bylaw 4.7.1 grants that bylaws governing Synod-level nomination and election procedures may be overridden by district bylaws. For example, the adoption of a new process for election of the Synod President (2010 Res. 8-13) did not obligate districts to elect their presidents by an electronic method prior to their conventions. They had pre-existing versions of their own rules and regulations, which take precedence over inferences from Synod-level nomination and election regulations under Bylaw 4.7.1.

The overarching principle to be respected in each and every case is that “[t]he 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. ... A district is the Synod itself performing the functions of the Synod” (Bylaws 4.1.1–4.1.1.1). Districts shall conceive their regulations in a manner that honors and respects the general expectations of all Synod’s congregations, as embodied in Synod’s Constitution and Bylaws, for its conventions, nominations, and elections. The *principles* evident in Synod’s regulations always govern district regulations. When in doubt, it is appropriate to assume that the *procedures* of Synod’s regulations apply. Ultimately, the Synod interprets its own Constitution and Bylaws and their applicability to its districts’ conventions, nominations, and elections.

The CCM, recognizing that this is a long-standing point of confusion, has asked Commission on Handbook to explore the possibility of bylaw changes to give districts more clear, comprehensive, and consistent guidance in developing appropriate regulations governing their conventions, nominations, and elections.

Question 1: Bylaw 4.2.1 (a) requires that district conventions “be governed by the bylaws adopted by the Synod for its conventions, insofar as these may be applicable.” To what extent, if any, do the words “as these may be applicable” provide latitude to districts to take what they believe to be reasonable exception to Synod bylaw requirements for its conventions (e.g., the Bylaw 3.1.8 [b] requirement that printed copies of convention workbooks be provided to all official delegates and representatives)?

Opinion: The commission’s ongoing review of existing and proposed district bylaws and regulations provides guidance to the districts as to (1) the applicability of Synod-level regulations by inference to district-level procedures (Bylaw 4.2.1[a]); and (2) whether districts’ “other regulations” (Bylaw 4.2.1[e]) are or are not “contrary to the Constitution and Bylaws of Synod.” Authoritative interpretation of the Constitution and Synod Bylaws rests with the Synod convention and with the commission. This Question does not admit a concise and general answer.

As to the example, Bylaw 3.1.8 (b) indicates that the Synod has determined *in principle* that the full participation of delegates, alternates, and officers, as well as that of all board, commission, and council members, requires that they receive advance printed copies of the *Convention Workbook*. There seems to be no compelling reason that the same requirement would not be applicable also at the district level, so the requirement applies (CCM Opinion 14-2705). Whether a district might, given the relatively smaller size of its workbook, operate *procedurally* on a different timetable than the Synod in this regard (perhaps publishing it six weeks instead of twelve before the convention, with comments on reports and overtures due three weeks before) could be argued.

Question 2: To what extent, if any, are the basic requirements for regional elections as articulated in Synod Bylaw 3.12.2.7 applicable to district regional officer and board member elections (e.g., use of nominating ballots; number of names on election slates, elective process to be used, non-allowance of convention floor nominations, ranking by separate ballots, etc.), given the bylaw’s parenthetical statement, “(This shall also be the process used for all other regional elections.)” and the final statement of Bylaw 4.7.1 regarding such nominations, elections, and appointments: “... as long as these provisions do not conflict with the Bylaws of the Synod”?

Opinion: The degree of latitude allowed districts in ordering their own nominations and elections procedures is indicated in part by an action of the 2013 Synod convention. It adopted a recommendation from the Commission on Handbook to amend Bylaw 4.7.1, adding the term “selection” between “nomination” and “election...of its vice-presidents.” A similar addition was made regarding “any regional officers or regional board of directors members” (Res. 7-13). Elsewhere in the Bylaws, *selection* reflects the procedure for *selection* (by the circuit) and *ratification* (by the district convention) of circuit visitors (Bylaw 5.2.2). Bylaw 4.7.1 thus allows district regulations specifying that regional officers are *selected* by their respective regions and then *ratified* by the district convention as a whole, to which “final determinations in elections to all district positions rightly belong” (Bylaw 4.7.3). Since this legitimate procedure is not the one laid out in Bylaw 3.12.2.7, said bylaw is not to be understood as necessarily binding on regional officer and board member elections at the district level. (A district could, of course, infer its procedure from Bylaw 3.12.2.7, if it so wished.)

There are limits on what procedures a district can adopt, as imposed by the Constitution and Synod Bylaws other than 3.12.2.7. In this example, the election of regional officers and board members may not be by regional *election*, without final involvement of the district convention. “A majority of all votes cast *by a district convention* shall be required in every election to all elective offices and elective board positions” (Bylaw 4.7.3). (It is also implied that where a region *selects* a single candidate, the district convention must have the right to amend the electoral ballot. The principle of the Synod bylaws that the convention as a whole must have at least the opportunity to make a meaningful choice [election] must be respected. The matter of how this long-standing principle that all elections must have at least two candidates applies to regional selection processes has been referred to the Commission on Handbook for clarification.) In another example (CCM Opinion 05-2425), the commission determined that district regulations may not allow a district board of directors to restrict a ballot, as Synod bylaws do not assign this activity to a board of directors.

Question 3: When districts inadvertently overlook or misapply bylaw requirements and fail to recognize such errors until it is too late to reverse course and remedy the oversight or mistake, what, if any, are the expectations of the Synod for remedying such situations?

Opinion: A district that finds that it has acted on a mistaken understanding of the Synod’s requirements should immediately consult with the Office of the President of the Synod. Such situations fall within his area of administration (Bylaw 3.3.1.2; Constitution Art. XI B 2).

The commission “exists to interpret the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of Synod and ensure that the governing instruments of the Synod and its agencies are in accord with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.9.2). In cases of uncertainty, districts are advised to consult the commission.

Adopted April 10–11, 2015

Synod Convention Nominations Processes (15-2768)

The Secretary of Synod presented the Commission on Constitutional Matters with questions concerning the nominations processes for Synod conventions, questions related to preparation for the meeting of the Committee for Convention Nominations scheduled for January 7–9, 2016, and related to the preparation of ballots for regional elections scheduled to be mailed to all congregations later in 2015.

A. The first series of questions dealt with the adoption of 2013 Res. 5-05B, wherein the Synod convention adopted a new paragraph (f) for Bylaw 3.12.3.5:

(f) The committee for convention nominations shall establish and maintain a procedure to generate and publish in advance of the convention a list of names from all who have been nominated for Synod boards and commissions who meet the qualifications (Bylaws 3.10.5.2 7 and 3.6.6.3) to serve on a Concordia University System board of regents or the Concordia University System Board of Directors.

Question 1: Will it be appropriate for the Secretary of the Synod to devise, as part of his duties to obtain names and information for presentation to the Committee for Convention Nominations at its first meeting (Bylaw 3.12.3.4 [f]–[g]), a procedure to present to the committee at its January meeting for carrying out the requirements of Bylaw 3.12.3.5 (f)?

Opinion: The pertinent provisions of the Synod’s Bylaws concerning the work of the Committee for Convention Nominations not only anticipate the Secretary of Synod handling a substantial amount of the preliminary work of the Committee for Convention Nominations (Bylaw 3.12.3.4); they also provide that although the

Secretary is not a member of the committee, he shall convene the initial meeting of the committee and shall also “be available, upon call, for consultation” (Bylaw 3.12.3.5). The committee is responsible for informing itself of its duties and the requirements of each position for which it must select candidates. It also elects its own chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary and is required to organize its work “in whatever way it deems necessary” (Bylaw 3.12.3.5 [b] and [c]). Given the short time frame from the committee’s meeting in January and the convention slightly more than 6 months later, it is understandable that the Secretary of Synod would be on call for consultation, for there is much to be done during that relatively short period of time. There is nothing that precludes the Secretary of Synod developing a procedure for presentation to the committee at its first meeting for whatever use the committee may determine appropriate.

Question 2: If it is appropriate to devise a procedure, will it be appropriate for the Secretary of the Synod, as part of his duties to facilitate the work of the Committee for Convention Nominations, to contact those persons who have been nominated for Synod boards and commissions to obtain the information that will be necessary to determine if they meet the qualifications requirements provided in Bylaws 3.10.5.2 7 and 3.6.6.3; to learn of their willingness to serve if nominated and subsequently elected to a CUS board position; and to subject the information to the screening process required by Bylaws 3.10.5.2 7 and 3.6.6.3—in preparation for the meeting of the Committee for Convention Nominations?

Opinion: The provisions of Synod Bylaw 3.12.3.4 see the Secretary doing a great deal of the preliminary work for the Committee for Convention Nominations. Moreover, in Bylaw 3.12.3.5 (e) the responsibility for ultimately reviewing and verifying that the nominees for positions on boards of regents meet the qualifications set forth in Bylaw 3.10.5.2 7 belongs partially to the Secretary of the Synod, the same also true for positions on the Concordia University System Board of Directors and the qualifications set forth in Bylaw 3.6.6.3. It is not inappropriate for him to have this level of involvement as part of his duties in gathering the information necessary to satisfy this requirement.

Question 3: If it is appropriate to carry out the process described by #2 above, can the required list provided to the Committee for Convention Nominations include only the names of those who qualify for a CUS board position and who have indicated that they would be willing to serve if elected? Or must the list contain all names of all nominees for all boards and commissions who have been nominated for other boards and commissions, identifying those who meet qualification requirements and have consented to serve if nominated and elected?

Opinion: Synod Bylaw 3.12.3.5 (f) requires that the list referenced include “all” names nominated for Synod boards and commissions “who meet the qualifications (Bylaws 3.19.5.2 7 and 3.6.6.3) to serve on a Concordia University System board of regents or the Concordia University System Board of Directors.”

Question 4: As the Committee for Convention Nominations goes about its work, may it use nominees from the Bylaw 3.12.3.5 (f) list as necessary to satisfy the requirement of Bylaw 3.12.3.6 (a)? As the Committee for Convention Nominations goes about its work as described in Bylaw 3.12.3.6, must/should the report described in paragraph (c) include mention, in the case of CUS elections, that

the candidates have satisfied the requirements of Bylaws 3.6.6.3 or 3.10.5.2 7 as pertinent?

Opinion: As the Committee for Convention Nominations goes about its work, it may select nominees that appear on the Bylaw 3.12.3.5 (f) list as necessary to satisfy the requirement of Bylaw 3.12.3.6 (a), *so long as they are names received through the regular nominations process*. And yes, the report described in Bylaw 3.12.3.6 (c) should also include mention that the candidates satisfy the requirements of Bylaws 3.6.6.3 or 3.10.5.2 7 as pertinent.

Question 5: Must the list created under the procedure established by the Committee for Convention Nominations include also the names and required information of those nominated for regional board positions, e.g., Board of Directors, Board for National Mission, and Board for International Mission? If the answer to this Question is “yes,” will this include every individual from every region for every board or commission position who has received at least one nomination?

Opinion: The list thus created must include also the names and required information of those nominated for regional board positions (e.g., Board of Directors, Board for National Mission, and Board for International Mission) who have been found qualified under the processes described in Bylaw 3.12.3.5 (e). As noted previously, Bylaw 3.12.3.5 (f) requires that the list referenced include “all” names nominated for Synod boards and commissions and found qualified—whether regional or not, and from every region, for every board or commission position. This is so even when an individual receives only one nomination for a position. However, names nominated *only* for regional positions, and therefore not received by the Committee for Convention Nominations through the regular nominations process, are not available to the committee as it selects candidates under Bylaw 3.12.3.6 (a). Names nominated for regional positions and included in the Bylaw 3.12.3.5 (f) list become available only as floor nominations at the convention and only if the convention so orders by a simple majority vote (Bylaw 3.12.3.7 [c]).

Question 6: Will it suffice to satisfy Bylaw 3.12.3.5 (f) expectations if the final list of qualified persons is published in the *Convention Workbook* as part of the Committee for Convention Nominations report?

Opinion: Yes.

B. The remaining questions were prefaced with the information that this will be the first convention to fill regional positions for which there will be incumbents who will have served first terms. It was also noted that the nominations process outlined by Bylaw 3.12.2.7 is understood to be the process that is required to be used for all regional elections.

Question 7: Is it correct to assume that the principle articulated by Bylaw 3.12.3.4 (d) pertains only to that nominations process that is the responsibility of the Committee for Convention Nominations and does not apply to regional elections?

Opinion: Yes.

Question 8: Given the relatively quiet nature of board service, especially on mission boards, whose members may escape public notice but whose six years of experience may be regarded as valuable and a consideration for reelection, to what extent, if any, may incumbency be made known in the regional nominating ballot process?

Opinion: There is no basis for making incumbency known in the “regional nominating ballot process.” Bylaw 3.12.4.1 requires that in all elections, all names shall be listed “without any distinctive

mark, except where regional representation is a preference or requirement of the Synod.” The same principle applies in the nomination process, to avoid giving anyone an unfair advantage over others who may be nominated. At the same time, the fact of incumbency may be helpful to know, especially since incumbents are not automatically nominated by reason of their incumbency in the regional nominations process. It may therefore be noted in explanatory material accompanying nominating ballots that incumbency information is available via the Internet or *Lutheran Annual*, or by direct inquiry to the boards having regional positions open for nomination and subsequent election.

Adopted July 10–11, 2015

Follow-Up Questions re CCM Opinion 14-2724 (15-2771)

A pastor of the Synod, via a June 15, 2015, email, submitted “clarifying questions regarding CCM Opinion 14-2724 on Bylaw 3.8.3,” the questions apparently prompted by a frequently-asked-questions document provided by the Office of the President. As required by Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (b), the commission notified those officers and/or agencies of the Synod directly impacted by the request and provided opportunity for submission of information regarding the matter(s) at issue.

The commission noted that the questions as submitted reveal a need for clarification of the duties of the Synod’s two foreign mission entities, the Board for International Mission (BIM) and the Office of International Mission (OIM):

- The BIM is primarily a policy-making agency charged with “developing and determining policies in support of mission and ministry in foreign countries” (Bylaw 3.8.3) and providing oversight of the implementation of those policies by the OIM (Bylaw 3.8.3.1). The BIM also serves as the Synod’s agency “through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod” (Bylaw 3.8.3).
- The OIM implements the policies provided by the BIM “for the coordination of and in support of ministries of the Synod in foreign countries” (Bylaw 3.8.3.1), including “placement and support of foreign missionaries” (Bylaw 3.8.3.3). It also receives direction from the President of the Synod through the Chief Mission Officer “on all aspects of its responsibilities” (Bylaw 3.8.3.4) and offers recommendations to the BIM for policies (Bylaw 3.8.3.3) that will assist “in support of mission and ministry in foreign countries” (Bylaw 3.8.3).

Question 1: The document that is commended publicly by the Office of the President for consideration and clarification regarding the opinion of the CCM 14-2724 states that said opinion does not address short-term mission trips. (1) Is this correct that the opinion does not address short-term mission trips? (2) How can the length of time (short-term vs. long-term) be a consideration when the bylaws do not address this difference? The Bylaws clearly state that the BIM is the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to foreign mission areas of the Synod. If the elected/appointed/hired people at the BIM are the only sending agency, how does the length of time make a difference? The BIM’s own document regarding short-term missions clearly points out the horrible things that have and can happen if short-term missions are not done through the BIM. (3) What is the definition of a short-term mission as opposed to a long-term mission?

It is also noteworthy that the BIM in their document “LCMS Best Practices in Short-Term Mission” use[s] this bylaw to point [out] how it is “vital” that any LCMS person work through the BIM and be approved by those elected/appointed/hired individuals there. Vital is a very ambiguous word that could be used as either a good idea

or mandatory. Nevertheless, this bylaw is used, at a minimum, by the BIM to show that this bylaw does apply to short-term missions in some regards. Thus, there is at least some confusion as to what is encompassed by the terms “only sending agency.”

Opinion: “Foreign missions” is a jurisdiction that the Synod has reserved for itself (Bylaw 4.1.5), and congregations and church workers by their membership in the Synod have agreed to honor this jurisdiction. Bylaw 3.8.3 then specifically addresses formal mission activity by the Synod, naming the BIM as the sending agency solely responsible for “the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries ... for the ministries in foreign areas.” But it has also become necessary to distinguish between missionary efforts involving such official actions as listed in Bylaw 3.8.3 and other more spontaneous and short-term mission activity that takes place in support of ministries of the Synod in foreign countries (Bylaw 3.8.3.1), often within the jurisdictions of partner churches. The best-practices document, called for by the 2013 convention, invites and facilitates such short-term mission and ministry activity, thereby also fostering the good order clearly intended by the Synod with the adoption of Bylaws 3.8.3–3.8.3.6.

Therefore, in answer to the specific questions asked under Question 1: (1) Opinion 14-2724 did not directly address short-term mission trips, instead zeroing in on formal mission efforts that involve calls or contracts. The Synod itself, in keeping with its foreign missions jurisdiction, has addressed matters related to short-term mission efforts by requiring the creation of the short-term missions document [2013 Res. 1-08 “To Work Together in Mission,” *Proceedings*, p. 103]. Hence, (2) the Synod itself has already made this distinction between short- and long-term mission efforts, (3) the definition of “short-term mission” necessarily becoming mission activity other than what is specifically addressed by Bylaw 3.8.3. Districts and congregations engaged in mission projects are therefore encouraged to communicate their international mission activities to appropriate Synod entities “for the purposes of healthy coordination and good stewardship” (2013 Res. 1-08).

Question 2: As this bylaw states that the BIM is the only sending agency to foreign mission areas, and the opinion of the CCM seems to be directed primarily towards the districts and congregations that form up the Synod, does this apply to all agencies and their elected/appointed/hired workers? Thus the point, is it necessary for the seminaries, colleges, and all agencies to work solely through the BIM for sending professors and workers around the world if said country is a designated foreign mission field?

Opinion: CCM Opinion 14-2724 responded to specific questions pertaining to districts, congregations, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations. The Synod’s seminaries, colleges, and other agencies must also comply with the requirements and expectations of Synod Bylaw 3.8.3 and 2013 Res. 1-08 and related policies provided by the BIM.

Question 3: In the interpretation of the opinion that is commended by the Office of the President, a hyperlink is given to know what those foreign areas are. It is a map of every place to which any funds have gone, any agreement is in place, any missionary is working, or there is anything taking place. Is the definition of a foreign area any country in which there is contact? Thus, if the BIM has given a grant for Bibles to be sent to China, does that mean that work among the over 1 billion in China is off limits except through the BIM?

Opinion: Coordination and cooperation are essential for good order, especially for such a widespread and varied activity as foreign missions. Designation of foreign mission areas is not intended to curtail interest or activity.

Bylaw 3.1.4.3 assumes the existence of foreign mission areas and suggests that they are a concept that is more general than specific. It remains for the Board for International Mission and the Office of International Mission, under the guidance of the Chief Mission Officer who is under the direction of the President of the Synod, to demarcate such foreign mission areas “in support of mission and ministry in foreign countries” (Bylaw 3.8.3). The Office of International Mission should be contacted if there is interest in conducting or participating in mission activity in a foreign area.

Adopted July 10–11, 2015

Service of Retired District President on Seminary Board of Regents (15-2777)

With a letter dated September 11, 2015, a member of the Synod called attention to Bylaw 3.10.4.2 and its listing of members of seminary boards of regents, specifically referring to subparagraph 3, “A district president other than the geographical district president [who] shall be appointed by the Council of Presidents.” He requested the commission’s response to the following questions.

Question 1: If a man who *had* been a district president and *had* been named as the representative of the Council of Presidents to a seminary board of regents retires, his successor has taken office, and the *former* district president who retired has moved to another state and district, no longer living in or serving the district to which he had previously served as district president, is such a retired district president still a voting member of the seminary’s board of regents if the Council of Presidents has not yet named a successor to the seminary’s board of regents?

Opinion: The answer to this Question is “no,” since the former district president would no longer be able to fulfill the requirement for service as a voting member of the seminary’s board of regents, i.e., “a district president...appointed by the Council of Presidents” (Bylaw 3.10.4.2, subparagraph 3). When a district president is called upon to serve, such service is tied to his office and is his sole basis for authority to act. When an individual ceases to hold the office of district president, his authority to act as a district president also ceases (see CCM Opinion 12-2652).

Question 2: Does a “request” of the Council of Presidents for such a retiree to be the appointee of the Council of Presidents to the seminary’s board of regents confer a seat and a voting right and power to such a retired district president? If so, what bylaw of the Synod permits this, and what of the Council of Presidents is an action of the *entire* body of the Council of Presidents? Are the Synod’s Constitution and Bylaws in fact applicable to actions and governing, or can assertion of “custom” overrule the Constitution and Bylaws? If so, why and how?

Opinion: There is no provision in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod that would allow for a request to a former district president to serve in a position that requires the service of a district president. Nor can an assertion of “custom” overrule the absence of such a provision in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod. Where a bylaw specifically calls for an action by a “district president,” no agency of the Synod may set aside a bylaw of the Synod and authorize a person who does not hold the office of district president to act as such.

Adopted December 4–5, 2015

R57

II. FAQ re the Board for International Mission as the Only Sending Agency of the Synod (Bylaw 3.8.3) and the Commission on Constitutional Matters Opinion 14-2724

Q. What is the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM)?

A. “The Commission on Constitutional Matters 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” (Bylaw 3.9.2).

Q. Who serves on the CCM?

A. “The Commission on Constitutional Matters shall consist of six voting members:

1. Three ministers of religion—ordained, whose terms shall be for six years renewable once
2. Two attorneys, whose terms shall be for six years renewable once
3. The Secretary of the Synod, who shall serve as the secretary of the commission” (Bylaw 3.9.2.1)

Q. How are the members chosen?

A. District boards of directors nominate individuals. The Council of District Presidents chooses a slate of five names for each open position, and the President of the Synod appoints an individual from the slate provided.

Q. From where did the current language that the Board for International Mission (BIM) is the only sending agency for workers and funds (Bylaw 3.8.3) come?

A. In 1983, the Synod in convention adopted Res. 5-37 to add language to the Bylaws that the mission board was the only sending agency for workers and funds. The language from that 1983 bylaw carried through the restructuring in 2010 to the present day; indeed, **the current bylaw language represents nothing new**. As described in the 1983 Res. 5-37, the rationale for this language was that “[s]ome confusion has existed in the past when districts and other entities have sent missionaries (clergymen, teachers, and others) to foreign mission fields at their expense,” noting that there had been a standing assumption “that this is to be done through the [Synod’s] Board for Mission Services” (1983 *Proceedings*, p. 195). The same confusion that existed in 1983—among congregations, districts, and partner churches in foreign mission areas—remains to the present day. For instance, many of our international partners mistakenly identify any LCMS worker operating in a foreign mission area as being “officially sent.” But what does the current Bylaw 3.8.3 actually state?

3.8.3

The Board for International Mission is charged with developing and determining policies in support of mission and ministry in foreign countries for the Office of International Mission (Bylaw 1.2.1 [m]). These policies shall embrace and apply the mission and ministry emphases adopted by the national convention. Under the leadership of the President of the Synod, pursuant to Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1, the board shall assist in identifying the specific goals for the Office of International Mission. Policies determined by the board (implemented by staff) may include but not be limited to:

- strong mission leadership
- training of missionaries
- ministry for all of the Synod’s military personnel
- safeguarding the rights of partner churches
- ministry for all civilians and their dependents overseas

- international human care
- liaison with the colleges, universities, and seminaries of the Synod
- liaison with the chief ecumenical officer of the Synod
- international schools

Upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board shall serve as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas.

Q. Doesn’t restricting the calling and sending of international workers and funds to the Synod infringe on the rights of districts?

A. The calling and sending of workers and funds to foreign mission areas is one administrative area that the Synod has, since early on, intentionally reserved for itself by the decision of its members meeting in convention. In the same manner that districts may not call pastors to serve in other districts, districts may not call missionaries to serve in foreign mission areas. Likewise, congregations have the right to call their own pastor, but they do not have the right to call a pastor for someone else or for another entity.

Q. May districts send funds overseas to mission projects?

A. A district of the Synod may not send funds to an entity not part of corporate Synod, with the exception of an auxiliary or Recognized Service Organization affiliated with the Synod, for work in a foreign mission area of the Synod. Bylaw 3.8.3 states that the BIM is “the only sending agency through which ... funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod.”

Q. Are districts encouraged to have overseas relationships?

A. Yes. Districts have often provided vital support for called foreign missionaries and taken special interest in various mission fields with the support and encouragement of the BIM and the Office of International Mission (OIM). In this way and for the sake of good order and the most effective stewardship of resources, Bylaw 3.8.3.1 is fulfilled, which states in part: “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.” This provides healthy, direct relationships for support of the mission of the Gospel around the world.

Q. Doesn’t restricting the calling and sending of international workers and funds to the BIM infringe on the rights of congregations?

A. Congregations, by their adoption of the Synod’s constitutional articles and by their present-day subscription to such articles, freely self-limit their right of self-government. This means that congregations agree to work with the Synod in the area of foreign missions by not independently calling and sending workers to foreign mission areas.

Q. May congregations send funds overseas to mission projects?

A. Congregations may indeed support mission societies or overseas mission work, so long as the sending of such funds does not violate Art. VI of the Synod’s Constitution that requires members to reject heterodox tract and mission societies. Synod congregations should therefore not be supporting non-Lutheran (Baptist, Pentecostal, etc.) churches and their human care organizations.

Q. Are congregations encouraged to have overseas relationships and partnerships?

A. Yes. Such relationships can be very beneficial to congregations eager to support the mission of the Gospel. By working together with the BIM and the OIM, many problems and pitfalls are avoided. When congregations have “gone it alone,” there have been numerous instances where large financial projects failed, confusion and even great consternation were created with partner churches, and excessive time and corrective efforts were required of the Synod’s international staff to assist or rectify such situations. Congregations have, for instance, supported nonpartner churches or even non-Lutheran churches overseas to the detriment of the Synod’s international partners in the same area. Many pitfalls may be avoided when congregations are in good communication and intentional coordination with the BIM and the OIM. Given the current trends of globalization in technology, communications, and travel, as well as the burgeoning number of immigrants in the United States, the Synod’s national office recognizes that the number of contacts in foreign mission areas by individuals and congregations of the Synod has greatly increased, and these contacts bring many salutary opportunities for spreading the Gospel and strengthening the Church.

Q. How does CCM Opinion 14-2724 regarding Bylaw 3.8.3 affect mission societies created by Missouri Synod members and congregation members?

A. The CCM Opinion 14-2724 has limited effect on mission societies. Mission societies associated with the Synod provide great support and encouragement for international education and mission and are encouraged. Mission societies may raise funds and send funds overseas according to the laws of the United States and those of the recipient countries. Individuals and congregations may send funds to mission societies. Districts may not send funds to mission societies, however, unless those funds are sent through BIM for coordination with the OIM. Even prior to CCM Opinion 14-2724, a mission society was not able to call a rostered worker of the Synod, since a mission society is not an entity recognized by the Synod as a calling agency.

Q. May Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs) and auxiliaries send workers and funds internationally?

A. Yes. RSOs and auxiliaries (e.g., Lutheran Hour Ministries) are able to call and send workers internationally. They are also able to send funds internationally. RSOs and auxiliaries are encouraged to honor the Synod’s international mission policies and to work cooperatively with the BIM and the OIM. This cooperation and information sharing occurs regularly for the benefit of the mission of the Gospel. RSOs and auxiliaries, while operating independent of the Synod, also respect the protocol documents that may exist between The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and her partner churches (Bylaw 6.1.3 [g] and 6.2.1 [d]).

Q. How does CCM Opinion 14-2724 regarding Bylaw 3.8.3 affect congregational and district short-term mission trips?

A. The CCM opinion does not address short-term mission trips. The opinion primarily addresses the sending of permanent or long-term international workers. Congregations may send members and workers on short-term trips overseas. Congregations and districts are encouraged to work with the OIM and to follow best practices for short-term trips. Such trips are encouraged. It is, however, very helpful for congregations to make themselves aware of agreements that have been signed by the Synod with international partners in the area of the overseas short-term trips. The Synod’s international staff also often have tremendous experience with overseas individuals and

can provide helpful information and point out issues that congregations will want to be aware of in planning such trips. Congregations can also share vital information with the Synod staff as a result of their international work.

Q. What is a “foreign mission area” of the Synod?

A. A “foreign mission area” of the Synod is determined by where the BIM calls and sends workers overseas and where the OIM sends funds to support that work. Consideration also must be given to those areas where the President, as the chief ecumenical officer of the Synod, has signed or authorized the adoption of protocol agreements, working agreements, and other ecumenical agreements describing the relationship between the LCMS and another church body. The BIM will publish regularly through the OIM the foreign mission areas of the Synod. Visit <https://www.lcms.org/resources/worldmap> to see the LCMS Our Work in the World map.

Q. Is it possible for a district or congregation to issue a call to a church worker to serve in a foreign mission area of the Synod in cooperation with the BIM?

A. Yes. The BIM, in response to the desire of districts and the CCM opinion, has now adopted operative policies regarding Bylaw 3.8.3, which could allow consideration of either a dual call or a seconded call, should such a call be recommended to the BIM by the OIM. Supervision and financial responsibility for such a call would remain with the district or congregation. In a sincere desire to avoid quenching the work of the Holy Spirit while remaining respectful of and maintaining integrity in regard to their solemn duties defined by bylaws agreed to by the congregations of the Synod, the BIM and the OIM will seek to be supportive and flexible when working with districts and congregations in this new endeavor.

Q. Why is it important for congregations and districts to work with the BIM and the OIM?

A. There are many reasons that it is good for congregations and districts to work with the BIM and the OIM. Some have been mentioned above. An important consideration in our life together is good order, maintained in love and charity. Coordination between congregations and districts with the mission board and office can prevent confusion among partners. Congregations and districts that work with the OIM can receive assistance in areas of accountability and project management. In the past, congregations and districts have become involved in long-term, expensive projects that exceeded their original capacities or desires. Large amounts of money have been lost. Individuals sent have run into great difficulty, and extensive time, money, and effort have been expended by the Synod’s overseas staff to attempt to remedy situations. Coordination with the Synod can help districts and congregations plan goals and an exit strategy.

Another important consideration is that our Synod, congregations, and districts acknowledge the reality of life in a fallen, sinful world where significant threats exist—risks that are best assessed and managed by OIM staff and workers well-coordinated and familiar with the field in which they labor. Mission and mercy work can be targeted by enemies of the Gospel. The Synod has a vital interest in assisting districts and congregation with the goal of providing necessary safeguards for all workers entering a mission field where they may encounter dangerous situations for the sake of the Gospel.

The Synod encourages overseas work and contacts by districts and congregations. For the sake of the Gospel, the Synod is seeking to expand and improve the mechanisms for such activity, that “all things should be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40).

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III. Board for International Mission Operative Directives for Implementing LCMS Bylaw 3.8.3 (Referencing CCM Opinion 14-2724)

1. THE CALLING OR APPOINTING OF PERSONS SERVING WITHIN A FOREIGN MISSION AREA OF THE SYNOD—Bylaw 3.8.3's operative language states that the Board for International Mission "shall serve as the only sending agency through which workers ... are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod." Such language means:

- a. Any LCMS pastor or other rostered worker of the Synod, who will be working within the foreign mission areas of the Synod, is to be called or appointed solely by the Board for International Mission, through a recommendation by the Office of International Mission.
- i. This operative language is binding on LCMS districts and congregations whether the intent is for the call or appointment to remain under the authority and responsibility of the district or congregation or whether such person—called or appointed—is to be "lent" to another entity, whether affiliated with the Synod or not.
- ii. If a district or congregation of the Synod wants to have a call extended or an appointment made to a person, for the purpose of that person serving in a foreign mission area of the Synod, such call or appointment may be considered by the Board for International Mission, upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, within the context of a dual call or secondment. (See Definition Section for what would constitute a dual call or secondment.)
- b. With respect to a call to an LCMS pastor or other rostered worker or appointment of any other worker by an auxiliary recognized by the Synod or recognized service organization to serve in a foreign mission area of the Synod, International Mission through the Office of International Mission. It is understood that providing such information will facilitate good order and appropriate coordination with respect to activities occurring in that foreign mission area of the Synod including the recognition of any protocol document or other arrangement between the Synod and any authority within that foreign mission area of the Synod. Such communication and coordination should occur whether such call or appointment is to remain under the direct responsibility of the auxiliary or recognized service organization or such person is to be "lent" to another entity, whether recognized by the Synod or not.

2. THE PROVISION OF FUNDS FOR WORK UNDERTAKEN WITHIN FOREIGN MISSION AREAS OF THE SYNOD—Bylaw 3.8.3's operative language states that the Board for International Mission "shall serve as the only sending agency through which ... funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod." Such language, with respect to funds directed to an entity not part of corporate Synod, means:

- a. A district of the Synod may not send funds to an entity not part of corporate Synod, with the exception of an auxiliary recognized by the Synod or recognized service organization for work in a foreign mission area of the Synod; and
- b. With respect to congregations, auxiliaries recognized by the Synod, or recognized service organizations, such entities may direct funds to an entity not part of corporate Synod, for work in foreign mission areas of the Synod un-

derstanding that congregations, as members of the Synod, are to be cognizant of Art. VI 2 c, of the Synod's Constitution, and that auxiliaries recognized by the Synod and recognized service organizations are to be sensitive to the Constitutional and bylaw provisions and expectations of the Synod.

3. THE DEFINITION OF A "FOREIGN MISSION AREA OF THE SYNOD"—Bylaw 3.8.3's operative language is applicable to the sending of workers and funds to "foreign mission areas of the Synod." The authority for determining what are the "foreign mission areas of the Synod" rests solely within the authority of the Board for International Mission. With respect to auxiliaries recognized by the Synod and recognized service organizations, such organizations are expected to undertake any activities within "foreign mission areas of the Synod" in a manner that is supportive of and cooperative with the activities undertaken by the Synod, through the Office of International Mission.

4. WHERE THERE EXISTS A CALL OR APPOINTMENT BY A DISTRICT OR CONGREGATION, WHERE SUCH PERSON IS CURRENTLY WORKING IN A FOREIGN MISSION AREA OF THE SYNOD, OR WHERE FUNDS ARE BEING SENT TO A FOREIGN MISSION AREA OF THE SYNOD, IN CONTRAVENTION OF BYLAW 3.8.3 AND THESE OPERATIVE DIRECTIVES:

- a. In such circumstances, and as the appropriate calling or appointing authority, the Board for International Mission will proceed in a manner consistent with the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws. The Board for International Mission understands and will honor the "desire of people (and institutions within the Synod) to have direct and personal contact with a specific mission project." (See CCM Opinion 14-2724.)
- b. The Board for International Mission, upon information being received by and through the Office of International Mission, will address each circumstance on its own facts and merits.

APPLICABLE DEFINITIONS:

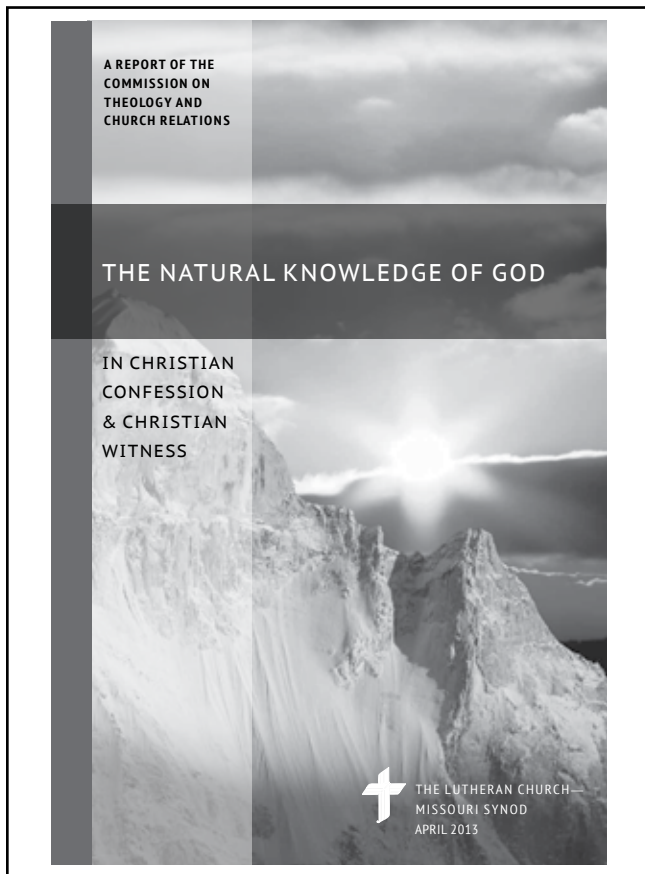
- All definitions that follow will be considered within the context of and understood by any and all appropriate language and definitions within the Constitution and Bylaws of the LCMS:
- "*Foreign mission areas of the Synod*" with respect to the operative language of Bylaw 3.8.3 means: Areas outside the 50 states of the United States of America as defined by the Board for International Mission, upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission. The Office of International Mission will, at least annually, publish the list of "foreign mission areas of the Synod."
- "*Communication*," within the context of BIM operative 1, means: Information with respect to the matter under consideration will be directed to the attention of the Office of International Mission, with a copy to the Chairman of the Board for International Mission, informing such authorities of the subject matter and any relevant and attendant information for which the communication is being directed.
- "*Coordination*," within the context of BIM operative 1, means: To take into consideration all protocol documents and any other arrangements or agreements entered into by the Office of the President of the Synod under Bylaw 3.3.1.1.2 that would impact the work being undertaken within that "foreign mission area of the Synod." All such protocol or other relevant documents will be made available as necessary and required through the Office of International Mission.
- A "*dual call*" or "*dual appointment*" means the following: A call or appointment issued by a district or congregation and by the

Board for International Mission where the supervision and financial responsibility associated with the call or appointment rests solely with the Office of International Mission under the policies of the Board for International Mission.

- A “*secondment*” means the following:
 - (a) A call or appointment made by a district or congregation (for which the call or appointment likewise requires a call or appointment by the Board for International Mission) where the supervision and financial responsibility associated with the call or appointment will remain with the district or congregation; or
 - (b) A call or appointment made by an auxiliary recognized by the Synod or recognized service organization where the supervision and financial responsibility associated with the call or appointment will remain solely with the auxiliary or recognized service organization but the auxiliary or recognized service organization is requesting that the call or appointment be made by the Board for International Mission.
- “*Protocol Document*” (or similar agreement or arrangement) means: A document that has been negotiated and is operative as between the chief ecumenical officer of the Synod under the authority of Bylaw 3.3.1.1.2 and an authority within the territory of a “foreign mission area of the Synod” or where ecumenical relations have been established.

**IV. THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS—
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The Natural Knowledge of God: Abbreviations

AC	<i>Augsburg Confession</i>
AE	<i>Luther's Works</i> . American ed. 55 vols. St. Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955–1986.
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
FC ep	Formula of Concord, Epitome
FC SD	Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration
LC	The Large Catechism
WA	<i>D. Martin Luther's Works, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Schriften</i> , 62 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1986)

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in Christian Confession and Christian Witness

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The Natural Knowledge of God

in Christian Confession and Christian Witness

I. Introduction

In the fall semester of her junior year in college, Michelle, a student in the natural sciences, observes a flyer advertising a public lecture on "Contemporary Science and the Question of God." Recognizing the name of the visiting lecturer, she attends more out of curiosity than any real interest in the so-called God question; indeed, she has long described herself as an agnostic—sometimes as an atheist—primarily on the conviction that empirical data either could not address the question of God's existence or, if it did, undermined belief in God. Throughout the course of the lecture, however, she is struck by the presenter's marshalling of empirical data, his suggestion that such data implies a certain "design" in nature, and his persuasive argument that such design further implies the existence of a designer above and beyond nature. Her curiosity further piqued, Michelle approaches the lecture's organizers—a Christian student society—and finds herself pursuing this discussion with them over the following days and weeks. By year's end she is not only attending the society's occasional studies and events, but increasingly even accepting their invitations to worship and Bible study.

On the same college campus, Josh, a religious studies major and life-long Christian who hopes to become a foreign missionary for his denomination, enrolls in a course on the anthropology of religion. Throughout the semester he is continually struck by the fact that no human cultures are known which have not professed and practiced some sort of religion. And while his focus is first drawn to the vast differences between the religious beliefs and expressions of the world's cultures, it gradually shifts to an increasing awareness of their fundamental similarities. Virtually all of the world's religions, he realizes, recognize the existence of a deity; acknowledge that this deity deserves human worship; and express this worship, in part, through relatively common codes of moral behavior. Because these virtually universal beliefs do not derive from a universally shared sacred text, Josh is drawn to conclude that they must have been derived from that which all human beings do share in common: reason and the evidence of the natural world. Further, though, he increasingly wonders why God, who allows these beliefs to be universally acknowledged, would not therefore deem them sufficient for salvation. By the semester's end he finds himself confessing that, though speaking differently of the deity, all religions actually believe in the same God, that all might lead to salvation, and that his desire to become a Christian missionary has almost entirely subsided.

Though each of the above accounts is fictional, together they serve to illustrate the two-sided coin—or double-edged sword—that is humanity's natural knowledge of God. Making implicit note of the potentially contradictory directions in which one might be led by such knowledge, the 2007 synodical convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) requested the preparation of "a study of the natural knowledge of God, and especially its implications for our public witness." Partially predicated this request was the stated conviction that "[t]he Scriptures teach that all people have a natural knowledge of God," and that "[a]n understanding of the natural knowledge of God can assist the members of the congregations of the LCMS in their witness." Also informing this request, however, was another pair of equally firm convictions: not only is humanity's natural knowledge of God "not saving knowledge"; but its very possession may lead many to be "confused about the one true God" and "to believe falsely that all religions lead to salvation."¹

That many are indeed confused about the one true God is made more than evident simply by fact of the world's plethora of religions; a host of mutually contradictory conceptions and confessions of the divine must lead inevitably to the conclusion that the vast majority of these are, at the very least, "confused." Similarly evident is that many increasingly do believe that religions other than Christianity can lead to salvation. Surveys conducted in the United States, for example, reveal that this is not only the belief expressed by three quarters of respondents, but even by nearly half of "strongly committed" evangelical Christians.²

With regard to the positive premises of the above-noted convention resolution, however, consensus remains elusive, not only within the universal Christian church, but even within the far narrower confines of the world's Lutheran bodies. Dissent from the confession that Scripture itself testifies that "all people have a natural knowledge of God" is not uncommon, even—sometimes especially—among those taking a very high view of Scripture's testimony and authority. Similarly, while one might assume that those admitting of a natural knowledge of God would indeed embrace it as being able to "assist [Christians] . . . in their witness," it has been noted with some warrant

¹ 2007 Resolution 3-04A "To Call for Study of the Natural Knowledge of God and Its Implications for Public Witness," 2007 Convention Proceedings, 121.

² See, e.g., Pew Research Center and The Pew Forum on Religions and Public Life, *Americans Struggle with Religion's Role at Home and Abroad* (Released 20 March 2002), 2, available online at <http://people-press.org/files/2002/03/150.pdf>; Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell provide even more recent statistics in *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010). Their 2006 survey reveals that 89% of Americans believe heaven is not reserved solely for those who share their religious faith (534). A 2007 follow-up survey of the original 89%, stipulating that "other faith" be read as "non-Christian faith," brought this percentage down only slightly, with a clear majority (54%) even of evangelical Christians confessing that non-Christian religions can lead to salvation (536). Putnam and Campbell also cite the results of the contemporaneous 2007 Pew Religious Landscape Survey, which largely confirms their own data (538).

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that many, "especially those in the Reformed and Lutheran traditions, have historically been cool or hostile to natural theology."³

In this light, the present study seeks to examine, first, the biblical, confessional, and dogmatic treatment of the natural knowledge of God and certain intimately intertwined concepts. Various historical and contemporary objections to such knowledge—and any theology or witness purportedly deriving from or making use of it—are then surveyed and analyzed, with the goal of highlighting both the legitimacy and limitations of humanity's natural knowledge of God. Informed by these conclusions, final attention is given to the faithful and fruitful use Christians might make of this knowledge in their public witness. Given the conceptual confusion which sometimes intrudes upon discussion of the issues here addressed, however, it will be advantageous to begin with some preliminary definitions and distinctions.

Natural Revelation: That general manifestation of God—whether recognized as such or not—in and through nature, as distinct from his special revelation in the incarnate Christ and inspired Scriptures.

Natural Knowledge: That knowledge of God, however dim or incomplete, to which humanity has access by means of natural revelation, and apart from special revelation.

Natural Theology: That exercise of reason by which a natural knowledge of God is acquired, or by which it is further supported, by means of natural revelation.

Natural Religion: False religion (as, e.g., *Deism*) in which natural revelation, natural knowledge, and natural theology are deemed sufficient for salvation, are elevated to a magisterial position, and are thus made the rule and norm by which even supernatural revelation, knowledge, and theology are judged.

Natural Law: Those objective and universal moral precepts—whether or not acknowledged as such, and whether or not recognized as divine in origin—which are innate or accessible to natural reason without recourse to special revelation.

In light of the various confusions surrounding the nature and, in some cases, the legitimacy of the concepts briefly defined above, their treatment in Scripture, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the dogmatics of Lutheran orthodoxy deserves some slightly more detailed examination.

³ C. Stephen Evans, "Apologetics in a New Key: Relieving Protestant Anxieties Over Natural Theology," in *The Logic of Rational Theism: Exploratory Essays*, ed. William Lane Craig and Mark S. Leedom (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 65.

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II. Natural Knowledge as Christian Confession

What is more definite, more certain, less open to question, than what the clear testimony of Scripture presents concerning the natural knowledge of God? . . . Of course the revealed knowledge of God is more complete than the natural knowledge, but it is no more firmly and certainly grounded in the testimonies of Scripture. ~ Abraham Calov⁴

A. The Testimony of Scripture

Though Scripture is of course the rule and norm of all Christian doctrine, it may nevertheless seem counter-intuitive—even contradictory—to look within God's special revelation for evidence of his natural revelation. And yet precisely because it is on the basis of God's inspired word alone that the church may speak confidently about God's ways with man and about man's knowledge of God, it would be presumptuous to speak dogmatically about any subject on which Scripture remains silent. In the emphatic statement quoted above, therefore, the seventeenth-century Lutheran dogmatician Abraham Calov (1612–1686) appeals not to his own experience or to the opinions of philosophers in affirming a natural knowledge of God; instead, he cites a number of biblical passages, at the head of which stands that passage widely recognized as the *locus classicus* concerning the natural knowledge of God:

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Rom. 1:19–20)

Though the language and logic of this text would appear unambiguously to affirm God's natural revelation of himself ("God has shown it to them"), man's resultant natural knowledge of God ("what can be known about God is plain to them," and, later in v. 21, "they knew God"), and even the possibility of a natural theology ("his invisible attributes . . . have been clearly perceived . . . in the things that have been made"), such a straightforward reading is not infrequently rejected either in whole or in part.

Some, for example, conclude that, while it "is plain that the idea of a natural revelation occurs" and that St. Paul here makes "a bare statement of man's factual knowledge of God," the text does not "support any theory of a *theologia naturalis*."⁵ Others would restrict the text to confirm that "God through his wisdom is revealing himself in creation," though this revelation is not at all understood or acknowledged by natural man; thus "it is more appropriate and more fitting for Paul's whole theology to conclude that there

⁴ Abraham Calov, *Consideratio Arminianismi* (1655), quoted in Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970 & 1972), 2:21.

⁵ Bertil Gärtner, *The Aeneas Speech and Natural Revelation*, tr. Carolyn Hannay King (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1955), 82.

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is no natural knowledge of God," much less any possibility of engaging in a natural theology.⁶ Still others go so far as to reject even the minimal claim that God naturally reveals himself to all men, arguing that Paul's use of the past tense (v. 21: "they *knew* God") implies that he "has in mind a particular historical occasion in the past when the Gentiles actually knew God" on the basis of some special revelation.⁷

Though Christian theology is not, of course, determined by majority vote, it is worth immediately noting that such conclusions are decidedly those of a minority. That God's natural revelation, for example, is so infrequently questioned is largely explained by Paul's explicit claim that God "has shown" (*phaneroun*: made evident, caused to see) even to the unrighteous "what can be known about God." Indeed, especially in light of the contrary prejudices of both his Jewish and Greco-Roman contemporaries, "it is striking to observe how bluntly and unequivocally Paul speaks of divine manifestation to everyone."⁸ Though Paul in no way suggests that this natural revelation makes possible a comprehensive knowledge of God—nor, most importantly, any saving knowledge of God—he appears equally unequivocal in stating that "what can be known about God" on this basis "is plain," and that these things "have been clearly perceived." For this reason even modern Lutheran theologians have not hesitated to echo Calov in affirming that "[f]or Paul the knowledge of God is not merely a possibility open to man, but the inexorable reality under which the whole world stands."⁹ And, again, though this natural knowledge is entirely insufficient for salvation, Paul can grant that it is, so far as it goes, "true" (cf. vv. 18 and 25). Indeed, it is precisely Paul's assertion that God has clearly revealed himself to all men and that all men thus possess some true knowledge of him that provides the force of his argument. Even those never having heard the testimony of God's special revelation are "without excuse" (v. 20) because they too "knew God" (v. 21) and yet "exchanged the truth about God for a lie" (v. 25). Thus, as one commentator summarizes: "Every person is 'without excuse' because every person—whether a first-century pagan or a twentieth-century materialist—has been given a knowledge of God and has spurned that knowledge in favor of idolatry, in all its varied manifestations."¹⁰

⁶ Richard H. Bell, *No One Seeks for God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 1:18–3:20* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 97; see also C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 116.

⁷ David M. Coffey, "Natural Knowledge of God: Reflections on Romans 1:18–32," *Theological Studies* 31 (1970), 676.

⁸ Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 154.

⁹ Ralph Bohmann, "The Natural Knowledge of God," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 34 (1963), 725. See also John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1934), 143–7, and Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), 371–6.

¹⁰ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 98. Compare also Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:372–3, as well as Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, 143: "This natural knowledge of God is so certain that the apostle says of all agnostics and atheists, who deny His divine existence and commands, that 'they are without excuse'."

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This exchange of a true natural knowledge for the lie of idolatry is highlighted not only in Paul's letter to the Romans (1:23, 25), but it also becomes the prominent focus of Paul's proclamations recorded in Acts 14 and 17—the two passages, after Romans 1, most frequently cited in this context.¹¹ As with Romans 1, some commentators would dispute whether either passage can legitimately be referenced in support of natural theology,¹² while others are insistent that they “cannot be fully expounded without opening the gate towards some sort of natural theology.”¹³ While the proclamation of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra (Acts 14:15–17)—the first New Testament record of a public witness to a non-Jewish audience—may not explicitly endorse or exemplify a natural theology, it does at the very least reiterate the claim of God's self-revelation in nature: “he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons” (v. 17).

It is God's providential ordering of creation to which Paul also appeals in his Areopagus address of Acts 17 (esp. v. 26). God has so ordered his creation that all men, says Paul, “should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him” (v. 27). It is rightly noted that Paul's use of the term “seek” draws on its use in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), with connotations of “groping” or “fumbling,” and therefore implicitly expresses doubt as to whether the God who should be sought can be truly discovered by natural means.¹⁴ Paul's conclusions regarding natural knowledge and natural theology are therefore perhaps not as emphatic here as in his letter to the Romans. It is worth noting, however, that even some of those who entirely reject any project of natural theology, and who rightly note that Paul's Areopagus address is almost entirely opposed to the beliefs of his audience, are still willing to acknowledge that Paul “does not imply that they knew no true religious propositions nor that Paul had no common affirmation with them.”¹⁵

Though it is primarily the New Testament passages above that are most frequently cited in affirmation of man's natural knowledge of God, the Old Testament does not remain silent on the subject. Foreshadowing Paul's emphasis on the providential ordering of creation naturally revealing its Creator, David proclaims in Psalm 19, for instance, that “[t]he heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (v. 1), and that “[t]heir voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (v. 4). Further, that this proclamation of nature itself is at least capable of providing some knowledge of its Creator appears to be the clear implication of the verses located between these: “Day to day pours out speech, and

¹¹ See, e.g., Roland Ziegler, “Natural Knowledge of God and the Trinity,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 69 (2005), 147.

¹² See, e.g., Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 99.

¹³ James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 26; see also at 36.

¹⁴ See Ziegler, “Natural Knowledge of God and the Trinity,” 148–9.

¹⁵ Stephen R. Spencer, “Is Natural Theology Biblical?” *Grace Theological Journal* 9 (1988), 65.

of God,” he addresses this charge directly to “some” within the congregation at Corinth. It is implausible here, too, that he means to imply that some have been received into the church despite their knowing nothing at all about God.

This is perhaps made even clearer by Paul's parallelism of “knowing God” and “being known by God” in Galatians 4:9, where the previous verse's claim that “you did not know God” cannot be read as synonymously parallel with God's not knowing man, that is, not being aware of man's existence. Rather, “[t]o know” is not used in any mundane sense of either “to perceive” or “to acquire knowledge about,” but in the biblical sense of “to experience,” and most specifically to experience the grace of God.¹⁶ Thus, as another commentator also notes regarding Paul's similar declaration in 1 Corinthians 1:21, “[a]t this point Paul's Jewish understanding of ‘knowing God’ comes to the fore. . . . The phrase in the next clause, ‘to save those who believe,’ is therefore the proper commentary on this one.”¹⁷ In other words, the ignorance of God highlighted in these passages is not an absolute ignorance, but an ignorance of the gospel and its effects.²⁰

B. The Concurrence of the Confessions

In light of the Lutheran confessors' desire to do nothing other than offer a faithful summary and explication of Scripture's doctrinal content, it will not be surprising that the Confessions set forth the same nuanced portrayal of man's natural knowledge of God that is evident in Scripture itself. Similarly, though, because individual confessional statements—like individual biblical statements—may occasionally appear to contradict others, interpreters of the Confessions—again, like those of the Bible—can often lose sight of this nuance by emphasizing some passages over others.

This is the case, for example, when it is categorically asserted that “the Lutheran Confessions are entirely consistent in denying natural man the ability to know God”;²¹ that, according to the Confessions, “[n]either God the Creator nor God the exacting Lawgiver, neither God's love nor God's wrath can be recognized in this fallen world”;²² and that such a conclusion “virtually

¹⁶ Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (Dallas: Word, 1990), 180; see also, e.g., Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 72.

¹⁷ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 72 n. 26; see also *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 395–97, there cited for explication of Paul's “Jewish understanding.”

²⁰ Thus Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), 582, commenting on 1 Cor. 15:34, can describe it as “ignorance regarding the resurrection and its implications for the Christian life” (emphasis added). Cf. also 2 Thess. 1:8 with its parallel between “those who do not know God” and “those who do not obey the gospel.” Similarly compare the manner in which the Lord himself speaks even of his chosen people not knowing him in, e.g., Jer. 4:22, Jer. 9:3, and Hos. 5:4.

²¹ Edmund Schlögl, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J.A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1961), 48.

²² Schlögl, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, 48.

night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard” (vv. 2–3). Or, as one commentator summarizes, “[i]t is not only the fact of general revelation that we find in Psalm 19,” but also the fact that this revelation “is known everywhere.”¹⁹ It is in light of such Old Testament testimony that it can be plausibly claimed that “the real source from which the Christian natural theology sprang is Hebraic,” rather than Hellenistic and pagan.¹⁷

It must be acknowledged, however, that apparent affirmations of man's natural knowledge of God are not the only parallels evident between the Old and New Testament witnesses. Also evident are similarities in what might, at least on their face, appear to be completely contradictory conclusions. Thus, for example, the same Psalmist who can speak of the heavens declaring the glory of God, of their revealing knowledge, and of this declaration being heard, can also comment more than once on the Lord looking “to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God” (Ps. 14:2, 53:2), and conclude in the negative (Ps. 14:4, 53:4). So, too, in the New Testament the same apostle Paul who could claim that even the heathen “knew God,” and had “clearly perceived” even some of his attributes, can also register his agreement with the Psalmist in declaring that “no one understands; no one seeks for God” (Rom. 3:11). Indeed, not only does Paul make an emphatic assertion of what the Psalmist had framed as a rhetorical question, but he amplifies this assertion by frequent repetition. He not only speaks in the past tense, declaring that “the world did not know God” (1 Cor. 1:21) and that “you did not know God” (Gal. 4:8), he also speaks similarly in the present tense of those “who do not know God” (2 Thess. 1:8) and who “have no knowledge of God” (1 Cor. 15:34).

Though apparently contradictory, a closer contextual examination of such passages reveals that they do not in fact undermine the confession of man's natural ability to acknowledge God's existence. They merely—though emphatically—deny that man does or can have any natural knowledge of the saving work of God in Christ. Among those described in 1 Corinthians 1:21 as not knowing God, for example, are the scribes mentioned in the previous verse. Certainly Paul's assertion cannot be read to imply that the Jewish teachers of the law were entirely ignorant of God's existence, or even his attributes. Similarly, when Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:34 that “some have no knowledge

¹⁶ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 162, 165. Cf. also H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Columbus: Wartburg, 1959), 178, who concludes that the Creator's existence “is a truth which is apparent even to the heathen,” and Franz Delitzsch, *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 1 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), 349, who writes: “it is no proclamation made in a corner; it is a proclamation in speech that is everywhere audible, in words that are everywhere understood, a *panepitaphos*.”

¹⁷ Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology*, 56. Not only do each of the commentators cited in n. 16 above thus conclude with cross-references to Romans 1; Boice, *Psalms*, 1:162, goes further to suggest that “this is exactly what the apostle Paul writes in Romans 1, in a passage that probably has the nineteenth psalm in mind, even though it is not directly quoted.” Intriguingly, where Paul does directly quote Psalm 19 (in Rom. 10:18), he seems even to equate nature's proclamation with, in some sense, gospel proclamation.

exhausts what the Confessions have to say about the ‘natural knowledge of God.’”²³ To be sure, there is no shortage of passages which, read in isolation, might support such a stark view. The *Large Catechism*, for example, confesses that, before being brought by God into the communion of saints, “we were entirely of the devil, knowing nothing of God.”²⁴ The *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, commenting on the effects of original sin, speaks similarly, noting bluntly that one such effect is “being ignorant of God.”²⁵

Both the *Apology* and the *Large Catechism* themselves, however, also contain further statements which prevent one from too hastily concluding that any natural knowledge of God is merely a theological fiction. Contrasting the effects of original sin with original righteousness, for instance, the *Apology* notes that the latter afforded man “a more certain knowledge of God”—the apparent implication being that man, even after the fall, does not lack all knowledge of God, but can possess only a less certain knowledge.²⁶ Thus the *Large Catechism* can not only note that “[t]here has never been a nation so wicked that it did not establish and maintain some sort of worship,”²⁷ but also that “[a]ll who are outside this Christian church, whether heathen, Turks, Jews, or false Christians and hypocrites—even though they believe that there is only one true God and worship [him]—nevertheless they do not know what His attitude is toward them.”²⁸

In this light it has been well noted that those confessional statements emphasizing natural man's ignorance of God should not be made to say more than they actually do:

Properly understood, they do not deny the natural knowledge of God, but rather point to the perversion of this knowledge into

²³ Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 51.

²⁴ LC 2.52. All quotations from the Lutheran Confessions, unless otherwise noted, are drawn from *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

²⁵ Ap 2.8; cf. also 2.14, 2.23.

²⁶ Ap 2.17; emphasis added. Thus, FC SD 2.9 can speak of “a dim spark of knowledge that a god exists.”

²⁷ LC 1.17. It is noteworthy that Luther here echoes, perhaps even paraphrases, the Roman pagan Cicero, who likewise asserted that “there is no tribe so civilized or so savage as not to know that it should believe in a god.” Cicero, *The Laws*, 1.24.

²⁸ LC 2.66. The above translation of this much disputed passage follows that of the Concordia Theological Seminary faculty, “Religious Pluralism and Knowledge of the True God: Fraternal Reflections and Discussion,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66 (2002), 300. For further commentary on this passage, see also Charles Arand and James Voelz, “Large Catechism, III, 66,” *Concordia Journal* 29 (2003), 232–4; John Nordling, “Large Catechism III, 66, Latin Version,” *Concordia Journal* 29 (2003), 235–9; Thomas Manteluef, “What Luther Meant,” *Concordia Journal* 29 (2003), 366–9; E. Christian Kopff, “Who Believes in and Worships the One True God in Luther's Large Catechism?” *Logia* 13/3 (2004), 55–57; Edward Engelbrecht, *One True God: Understanding Large Catechism II.66* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007); and Jon Bruss, “Luther, Non-Christians, and the One True God: Another Go,” *Logia* 20/2 (2011), 57–9.

an idolatry that is in effect a practical, if not a theoretical, ignorance of God. In other words, man's natural knowledge of God is always *ignoratio Dei* when contrasted with the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ.²⁹

Similarly, the Confessions

do not so much stress the lack of natural knowledge about God as they do its falseness. The natural knowledge of God sets forth a distorted picture of Him. It is incapable of showing us the God who justifies and saves from sin.³⁰

Conclusions such as the above—that sinful man's ignorance of God is not to be understood in absolute terms, but only in contrast to that knowledge revealed in the saving person and work of Christ—are further substantiated by the manner in which the Confessions qualify and define the vocabulary employed in discussing man's natural knowledge of God. This becomes evident, for example, in the confessional use of qualifying adverbs such as "truly." The *Formula of Concord* can thus assert that "pagans had something of a knowledge of God," while going on in the same sentence to remark that "they did not *truly* know him."³¹ That this adverbial qualifier is best understood in soteriological rather than epistemological terms might further be inferred by comparison with the *Augsburg Confession's* similar usage: "all who know that they are reconciled to the Father through Christ *truly* know God."³² Similarly to be understood is the confessional commentary on natural man's understanding (or ignorance) of "spiritual matters." The *Formula of Concord* is quite emphatic, for example, in asserting that "Scripture denies to the natural human mind, heart, and will every ability, aptitude, capability, and capacity to think anything good or proper in spiritual matters by themselves."³³ Quoting Luther, however, the *Formula* proceeds quickly to define the scope of "spiritual matters," referring to "spiritual and divine matters, *which concern the soul's salvation*."³⁴

In view of the above it becomes increasingly apparent that what the Confessions—in agreement with Scripture—deny is not any and all natural knowledge of God, but a natural knowledge of the gospel, as, again, the *Formula* makes clear:

[E]ven though human reason or natural intellect may still have a dim spark of knowledge that a god exists . . . , nevertheless it is

²⁹ Bohlmann, "The Natural Knowledge of God," 730.

³⁰ Holsten Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions (1529–1537)*, trans. Gene J. Lund (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972), 67.

³¹ FC SD 5.22; emphasis added.

³² AC 20.24; emphasis added.

³³ FC SD 2.12.

³⁴ FC SD 2.21; emphasis added.

ignorant, blind, and perverted so that even when the most skillful and learned people on earth read or hear the gospel of God's Son and the promise of eternal salvation, they still cannot comprehend, grasp, understand, or believe it on the basis of their own powers.³⁵

In simultaneously affirming natural man's "legal" knowledge of God while denying the possibility of his "evangelical" knowledge of God, the formulators profess not only to be faithfully restating the biblical testimony, but also to be keeping faith with the theology of Martin Luther (1483–1546). Thus they rightly note that

Dr. Luther emphasized this distinction with particular diligence in nearly all his writings and specifically indicated that there is a vast difference between the knowledge of God that comes from the gospel and that which is taught and learned through the law.³⁶

While orthodox Lutherans are doctrinally bound only to the Scriptures and their explication in the *Book of Concord*, and not to any of Luther's own non-confessional writings, such works do provide important insight for properly understanding both the intent and content of the Confessions. Again, the *Formula* itself makes this point explicitly:

Because Dr. Luther must deservedly be regarded as the foremost teacher of the churches that subscribe to the Augsburg Confession, since his entire teaching in sum and content was set down in the articles of the Augsburg Confession and presented to Emperor Charles V, the actual intention and meaning of the Augsburg Confession should not and cannot be derived more properly and better from any other place than from Dr. Luther's doctrinal and polemical writings.³⁷

For this reason some of Luther's own extra-confessional commentary on the natural knowledge of God also deserves brief examination.

C. The Profession of Luther

As noted above, even in Luther's confessional writings he could appeal to the universality of worship as implicit evidence of man's natural knowledge of God. In doing so he simply reiterated the view that would be regularly expressed in his exegetical and occasional writings. Commenting in 1535, for example, he similarly noted that "the forms of worship and the religion that have been and remained among all nations are abundant evidence that at

³⁵ FC SD 2.9.

³⁶ FC SD 5.22.

³⁷ FC SD 7.41.

some time all men have had a general knowledge of God."³⁸ He not only confesses that even worshippers of false idols "have a knowledge of divinity in their hearts,"³⁹ but he also goes so far as to conclude that such worship would be impossible without natural knowledge.⁴⁰ Thus, too, can he even regularly reaffirm the more controversial acknowledgement of the *Large Catechism*, that even "heathen, Turks, Jews, or false Christians and hypocrites" are not without the knowledge that "there is only one true God."⁴¹

Perhaps most revealing of Luther's insistence on this point is his discourse concerning the mariners on whose ship the prophet Jonah had attempted to flee his call to Nineveh. Commenting on Jonah 1:5—"Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god"—Luther writes at length:

Here you find St. Paul's statement in Rom. 1:19 concerning the universal knowledge of God among all the heathen, that is, that the whole world talks about the Godhead and natural reason is aware that this Godhead is something superior to all other things. This is here shown by the fact that the people in our text called upon a god, heathen though they were. For if they had been ignorant of the existence of God or of a godhead, how could they have called upon him and cried to him? Although they do not have true faith in God, they at least hold that God is a being able to help on the sea and in every need. Such a light and such a perception is innate in the hearts of all men; and this light cannot be subdued or extinguished. There are, to be sure, some people, for instance, the Epicureans, Pliny, and the like, who deny this with their lips. But they do it by force and want to quench this light in their hearts. They are like people who purposely stop their ears or pinch their eyes shut to close out sound and sight. However, they do not succeed in this; their conscience tells them otherwise. For Paul is not lying when he asserts that they know something about God, "because God has shown it to them" (Rom. 1:19).

Let us here also learn from nature and from reason what can be known of God. These people regard God as a being who is able to deliver from every evil. It follows from this that natural rea-

³⁸ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), in *Luther's Works: American Edition* [hereafter AE], 56 vols. ed. J. Pelikan and H. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–86), 26:399.

³⁹ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans: Scholia* (1515), AE 25:157.

⁴⁰ Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, AE 26:400.

⁴¹ LC 2.66; see, e.g., Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John* (1537), AE 22:153: "All Turks, Jews, papists, Tartars, and heathen concede the existence of a God, the Creator of heaven and earth," and Martin Luther, *Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany* (1546), in *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [hereafter WA], *Schriften*, 62 vols (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1986), 51:151: "Turks, Jews, and all heathen know to say of God as much as reason can know from his works, that he is a creator of all things, that one should be obedient to him, etc."

son must concede that all that is good comes from God; for He who can save from every need and misfortune is also able to grant all that is good and that makes for happiness. That is as far as the natural light of reason sheds its rays—it regards God as kind, gracious, merciful, and benevolent. And that is indeed a bright light.⁴²

Luther's commentary on this passage is further revealing, however, because it immediately proceeds also to highlight the "two big defects" inherent in what is otherwise a "bright light."

First, reason does admittedly believe that God is able and competent to help and to bestow; but reason does not know whether He is willing to do this also for us. That renders the position of reason unstable. . . . The second defect is this: Reason is unable to identify God properly; it cannot ascribe the Godhead to the One who is entitled to it exclusively. It knows that there is a God, but it does not know who or which is the true God. . . . Thus reason never finds the true God, but it finds the devil or its own concept of God, ruled by the devil. So there is a vast difference between knowing that there is a God and knowing who or what God is. Nature knows the former—it is inscribed in everybody's heart; the latter is taught only by the Holy Spirit.⁴³

The distinction here made between knowing "that there is a God" and knowing "who or what God is," though expressed in terms inherited from medieval scholasticism, is precisely that observed in the previous surveys of Scripture and the Confessions and associated with the distinction between law and gospel. Thus it is this language which Luther elsewhere uses to highlight the same distinction. This is seen most explicitly in his commentary on the Gospel of John, for example, where he notes that "There are two kinds of knowledge of God: the one is the knowledge of the Law, the other is the knowledge of the Gospel. For God issued the Law and the Gospel that He might be known through them. . . . Reason can arrive at a 'legal knowledge' of God. . . . But the depth of divine wisdom and of the divine purpose, the profundity of God's grace and mercy, and what eternal life is like—of these matters reason is totally ignorant."⁴⁴

It is also in view of this distinction that Luther harmonizes those biblical passages affirming a natural knowledge of God with those biblical passages asserting man's natural ignorance of God. Commenting on Galatians 4:8–9, for instance, he asks, "If all men know God, why does Paul say that before the proclamation of the Gospel the Galatians did not know God?" He answers: "There is a twofold knowledge of God: the general and the particular. All men

⁴² Martin Luther, *Lectures on Jonah* (German, 1526), AE 19:53–4.

⁴³ Luther, *Lectures on Jonah*, AE 19:55.

⁴⁴ Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John*, AE 22:150–3.

have the general knowledge, namely, that God is, that He has created heaven and earth, that He is just, that He punishes the wicked, etc. But what God thinks of us, what He wants to give and to do to deliver us from sin and death and to save us—which is the particular and the true knowledge of God—this men do not know.”⁴⁵ Indeed, so narrowly does Luther—like the confessors—define “true” knowledge of God in terms of gospel knowledge, he can not only reject knowledge of God’s existence and creative activity as being “true” knowledge; he can further state: “Nor is this knowledge your belief that Christ was born from a virgin, suffered, died, and rose again. No, you have the true knowledge of God when you believe and know that God and Christ are your God and your Christ.”⁴⁶

While rightly emphasizing the narrow scope of that which Luther defines as “true” knowledge of God—that is, knowledge of the gospel, which is inaccessible to natural reason—one ought also to recognize how expansively Luther is able to conceive of that which natural men may—indeed, should—acknowledge on the basis of reason alone. Thus, for example, despite his frequent summary of natural knowledge in simple terms of knowing “that there is a God,” Luther regularly allows that men naturally know not only of God’s existence, but also of certain of his attributes. As noted above, Luther could assert in his commentary on Jonah that “the natural light of reason” itself “regards God as kind, gracious, merciful, and benevolent.”⁴⁷ Nor is this an isolated example; virtually the same appears both in his “early” works and his “mature” works.⁴⁸

Luther’s own expansive view of natural man’s knowledge—though never saving knowledge—of God is especially worth noting because it is not unusual for commentators to posit a radical break between the theology of Luther and the Lutheran dogmaticians on this point. For this reason, brief attention is finally given to the Lutheran dogmatic tradition, especially during the immediate post-Reformation era of “Lutheran orthodoxy.”

D. The Doctrine of the Dogmaticians

Representative of interpretations setting Luther against the Lutheran dogmaticians—even the earliest of these—is one prominent quotation and

⁴⁵ Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, AE 26:399.

⁴⁶ Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Second Epistle of St. Peter* (1523), AE 30:152.

⁴⁷ Luther, *Lectures on Jonah*, AE 19:54.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Luther, *Lectures on Romans* (1515), AE 25:157, where natural knowledge conceives of God as “invisible, immortal, powerful, wise just, and gracious,” and Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (1538), AE 3:117: “the heathen also have this understanding; they know that there is a supreme deity, that he must be worshipped, called upon, and praised, and that one should take refuge in him in all dangers. . . . They call God a helper, kind, and forgiving.” It does deserve noting, however, that Luther could, on occasion, speak in direct contrast to such views. So, e.g., he could also write that “God so orders this corporal world in its external affairs that if you respect and follow the judgment of human reason, you are bound to say either that there is no God, or that God is unjust.” Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), AE 33:291.

critique of Philip Melancthon (1497–1560). Commenting on the natural knowledge of God, Melancthon could write:

There flashes in the mind the knowledge which affirms not only that there is one God, the Maker of the whole world and order, in all nature, but also teaches what kind of God He is, namely, wise, beneficent, just, One who assigns like things to like things, truthful, One who loves moral purity, One who demands that our obedience conform to His will, and One who punishes with horrible punishments those who harshly violate this order, as the whole history of the human race bears witness.

In assessing such remarks, one commentator bluntly declares: “How far away from Luther we now are!”⁴⁹ In light of Luther’s views briefly elucidated in the previous section, however, there appears little warrant for supposing that this conclusion of Melancthon is “far away” from Luther’s own.

That Luther’s contemporary, colleague, and co-author of the Confessions did not radically deviate from Luther on this point requires emphasis because it has been rightly noted that “Lutheranism on the whole followed Melancthon in working out its position on natural theology.”⁵⁰ Further, that the later Lutheran theologians do indeed follow Melancthon deserves emphasis on account of suggestions that the dogmaticians progressively fall away not only from Luther on this point, but even from Melancthon himself.⁵¹ Again, though, it would be far more accurate to conclude that the orthodox dogmaticians not only do not go beyond the conclusions of Luther and Melancthon, but even that “[o]n no point does Lutheran orthodoxy go beyond the Lutheran symbols in its teaching concerning the natural knowledge of God.”⁵²

It is certainly true that the dogmaticians, in the interest of clarification, harmonization, and explication, introduce terms and distinctions found infrequently or not at all in Luther and the Confessions. It is likewise the case that the nature and scope of multi-volume dogmatic treatises allowed their authors to treat the subject in greater detail and at greater length than was deemed necessary in the exegetical, polemical, or confessional writings of Luther and his contemporaries. It might even be acknowledged that the seventeenth-century dogmaticians are much more emphatic in their defense of man’s natural knowledge, and the possibility of a natural theology, than were Luther and the confessors. Each of these moves, however, was prompted, in large part, by the rise of controversies non-existent in Luther’s own day.

Most notably, the Socinian heresy deriving from the teachings of Fausto Paolo Sozzini (1539–1604) flatly rejected the confession that natural man

⁴⁹ Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, 52 n. 4, and 53.

⁵⁰ Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 1:176.

⁵¹ Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, 50–51.

⁵² Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2:29.

had any innate knowledge of God or any capacity for naturally acquiring knowledge of God. It is especially in view of this denial of biblical and confessional testimony that the seventeenth-century dogmaticians frame their approach to the topic. Abraham Calov is representative in this respect, offering his summary propositions regarding man’s natural knowledge in the context of refuting the Socinian position. In opposition to the Socinian denial of reason’s ability to acquire some natural knowledge of God, for example, he concludes that “man, destitute of the revealed Word of God, can attain, by the use of sound reason, to some knowledge concerning God, His being and His general will or providence.” Similarly opposing the Socinian denial of any innate knowledge, he also concludes that “not only the faculty or power of knowing God, but also a certain knowledge of God, belongs to us by nature.”⁵³ That Calov’s position is hardly unique among the Lutheran theologians is rightly noted in its being described as a “typical Lutheran treatment of natural theology.”⁵⁴

That Calov, though treating the topic in much greater detail, remains consistent with his predecessors is perhaps hardly surprising in light of the fact that they, too, had already been forced to respond to denials of natural knowledge—and not from an outside sect such as the Socinians, but from within Lutheranism itself. Though not going so far as the Socinians in rejecting the possibility of some naturally acquired knowledge of God, Matthias Flacius (1520–1575) argued already in the sixteenth century that man’s nature had been so thoroughly corrupted by the fall into sin that no innate knowledge of God remained.⁵⁵ It is with a view to Flacius that dogmaticians such as Johannes Quenstedt (1617–1688) not only defend the assertion that all men do have a natural knowledge of God, but also that this knowledge is “true” knowledge: “that the natural knowledge of God is true, is evident from this, that the apostle expressly calls it truth, Rom. 1:18 sq., and with the addition, the truth of God, v. 25.”⁵⁶

⁵³ Abraham Calov, *Systema Locorum Theologicorum* (1655–77), quoted in Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1899), 108.

⁵⁴ Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 1:179; see also at 1:173: “There is nothing particularly original or new in the way Calov and the later Lutherans deal with the subject of natural and revealed theology.”

⁵⁵ For an overview of the “Flacian Controversy” in which context this point arises, see F. Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 144–52. See also Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 1:176–8.

⁵⁶ Johannes Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica* (1685), quoted in Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 108. It is to be noted that Quenstedt here freightes the word “true” in the broader epistemological sense, rather than the narrower soteriological sense employed by the Confessions. He also qualifies the scope of this truth by immediately acknowledging that “we must distinguish between the natural knowledge of God, considered in and through itself, and in so far as it has united with it imperfection, corruption of reason, and a proclivity to various errors.”

The Flacian and Socinian controversies with regard to the natural knowledge of God are significant, however, not merely because they prompted the orthodox dogmaticians to formulate and defend more clearly and extensively the Lutheran position on the subject. They are significant also because they make evident that from the time of the Reformation itself, and even within Lutheranism itself, prominent objections to this position have been put forward. Because such objections have become only more frequent in subsequent centuries, the following section surveys and assesses some of these critiques and their impact on contemporary thinking about the subject.

III. Natural Knowledge and Natural Theology

An overreaction to rationalism has made us lukewarm toward natural theology, which in older times was seen as the necessary underpinning of positive theology. These gaps must of necessity be filled.

~ Ernst Hengstenberg⁵⁷

A. Enlightenment Opposition

When attention is primarily given to the Lutheran church, the seventeenth century is often deemed the “Age of Orthodoxy.” But the same century also inaugurated the European Enlightenment and what is often perceived as the “Age of Reason.” With respect to the natural knowledge of God, an explicit connection between the Lutheran dogmaticians and the Enlightenment philosophers is sometimes posited, as in the assertion that “the development of ‘natural theology’ is the march of history from Luther’s primal experience (*Urerlebnis*) up to the Enlightenment.”⁵⁸

It cannot be denied that this era did indeed witness, in some quarters, a crass reduction of natural theology to “natural religion.” Affirming both that God reveals himself in nature and that man’s natural reason is capable of deriving some knowledge of God from this revelation, the English Deists, for example, proceeded further to assert that God would be unjust if requiring the confession of something more than this natural knowledge. John Toland (1670–1722), for instance, bluntly demanded to know: why “should God require us to believe what we cannot understand?”⁵⁹ As such beliefs would be “contrary to Reason,” he purported to demonstrate that the specially revealed

⁵⁷ Quoted in Frederick Gregory, *Nature Lost? Natural Science and the German Theological Tradition of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 116.

⁵⁸ Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, 57.

⁵⁹ John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696), extracted in *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 346–7.

"Doctrines of the Gospel, if it be the Word of God, cannot be so."⁶⁰ Similarly, Matthew Tindal (1657–1733) rejected the content of any revelation "that will not suffer us to judge its Dictates by our Reason," and so concluded that true Christianity must be merely "a Republication, or Restoration of the Religion of Nature."⁶¹ One of the most concise summaries of the contents of this religion of nature, or natural religion, is found in the autobiography of America's most famous Deist, Benjamin Franklin:

I never was without some religious principles. I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity; that he made the world, and govern'd it by his Providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter. These I esteem'd the essentials of every religion.⁶²

These were deemed by Deists to be the "essentials of every religion" precisely because they summarized that knowledge of God which man might acquire naturally and without any aid of special revelation.

In significant respects, however, the Enlightenment project with regard to natural revelation, natural knowledge, and natural theology does not "develop" the conclusions of the orthodox dogmatists, but those of their opponents Flacius and Sozzini. Illustrative of this is the thought of John Locke (1632–1704), as formulated in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, one of the foundational texts of Enlightenment empiricism. Though for reasons other than those of Flacius, Locke too would reject the belief that man possesses an innate knowledge of God. Indeed, in Locke's influential view, man possesses no innate knowledge at all; in his own famous formulation, the human mind, before acquiring knowledge by means of sensory experience is, "as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas."⁶³ In contrast to the nearly unanimous teaching of the Lutheran theologians—that man can not only acquire some knowledge of God *via* the evidence of God's self-revelation in nature, but that he also possesses an innate knowledge of God—Locke's philosophy would allow only the former. The implication of this rejection of innate knowledge, inherited and affirmed by Locke's empiricist successors, was to limit the question of man's natural knowledge to that

⁶⁰ Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious*, in *Documents of the Christian Church*, 346.

⁶¹ Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature* (1730), in *Documents of the Christian Church*, 345, 346.

⁶² Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. H.S. Commager (New York: Modern Library, 1950), 91, with the same points reiterated again at 106–7. Franklin's summary echoes more or less exactly the "common notions concerning religion" delineated by Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648), often described as the father of English Deism. For Herbert's original formulation, see his *De veritate* (London, 1633), 210–19.

⁶³ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. A.C. Fraser, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1959), 1:121. In the same section he further clarifies that sensory experience is that upon which "all our knowledge is founded" (1:122).

which might be acquired by sensory experience. And while Locke himself did not deny the possibility of such an acquired knowledge, his more influential later disciples would, thus ultimately echoing the conclusions not only of Flacius but also of Sozzini (though, again, for different reasons).

These further conclusions become most evident in the thought of Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711–1776), whose "criticisms of natural theology are by far the most substantial in the English language and have been equaled in importance, if at all, only by those of [Immanuel] Kant."⁶⁴ Though Hume's various objections to the enterprise of natural theology and the possibility of a naturally acquired knowledge of God need not here be specifically detailed, they largely reduce to the argument that there is insufficient warrant for believing that the "effects" in and of the natural world require a supernatural or divine "cause," let alone one that bears any resemblance to the deity posited by classical theism.⁶⁵ Thus he concludes bluntly that any inferences from the evidence of nature to the existence of God are "uncertain and useless."⁶⁶ In this conclusion Hume is later echoed by the equally influential German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who similarly asserted that "all attempts of a merely speculative use of reason in regard to theology are entirely fruitless," and that "the principles of reason's natural use do not lead at all to theology."⁶⁷ His rationale for so concluding likewise parallels that of Hume. Positing an impenetrable barrier between the worlds of *phenomena* (the natural world accessible to the senses) and *noumena* (transcendent realities which may exist beyond man's mental categories of space and time), Kant also restricts man's natural knowledge to knowledge of *phenomena*.⁶⁸

In summary, then, while not ignoring the fact that some Enlightenment thinkers would embrace but distort the Christian affirmation of a natural knowledge of God—replacing the confession that such knowledge is true yet insufficient with the assertion that such knowledge is not only sufficient but is the *only* true knowledge of God—some of the most influential representatives of Enlightenment thought, rather than "developing" the natural theology of the dogmatists, flatly rejected it. More pointedly, though, in denying both an innate knowledge of God as well as any possibility of an acquired knowledge of him, they denied what appears to be the clear teaching of Scripture itself.

⁶⁴ Terrence Pendulum, "Hume's Criticisms of Natural Theology," in *In Defense of Natural Theology: A Post-Human Assessment*, ed. James F. Sennett and Douglas Groothuis (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 40. See also James F. Sennett and Douglas Groothuis, "Hume's Legacy and Natural Theology," in the same volume (pp. 11–12) who rightly note that modern philosophical critiques of natural theology virtually all echo Hume.

⁶⁵ The substance of Hume's various objections are to be found in sections X and XI of *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, and throughout his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

⁶⁶ David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. C.W. Hendel (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1955), 151.

⁶⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 586.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 338–65.

Nor were they unaware of this fact. The manner in which both Hume and Kant attempted to mute the implications of their conclusions is therefore revealing. Each explicitly frames what might otherwise appear to be a clear denial of long-held tenets of Christianity as, to the contrary, a defense of Christianity. Hume, for example, notes that he is especially "pleased with the method of reasoning here delivered, as I think it may serve to confound those dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the *Christian religion* who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason." His rationale for thus thinking, he explains, is that "[o]ur most holy religion is founded on *faith*, not on reason; and it is a sure method of exposing it to put it to such a trial as it is by no means fitted to endure."⁶⁹ Though there is little doubt that Hume's pious claim to be defending the priority of faith over reason is disingenuous and self-serving, it is precisely the same claim forwarded also by Kant, who claimed that he "had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith."⁷⁰

By framing their rejections of the natural knowledge of God as defenses of faith, both Hume and Kant made their conclusions attractive even to those otherwise hostile to the Enlightenment's often reductionist treatment of religious knowledge. Partially for this reason, the church's long consensus on natural knowledge began to dissolve, resulting in the subject becoming "one of the great crisis points of theological discussion" in the twentieth century.⁷¹ It is thus to the twentieth-century discussion that some attention is now given.

B. The "Reformed Objection"

Immediately noteworthy in many of the most prominent modern rejections of the natural knowledge of God are their echoes of Hume's and Kant's claims to do so only in the interests of faith. Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) provides one example of this pitting of faith against knowledge in his famous attempt to "demythologize" Christianity. In denying both natural and supernatural (i.e., miraculous) evidence as revelation capable of providing knowledge of God, Bultmann claims that he merely upholds Paul's and Luther's confession of justification by faith alone. His program, he argues, is nothing other than the "application of the doctrine of justification by faith to the sphere of knowledge."⁷² Thus he can also assert:

For Protestant theology, such a natural theology is impossible. Not only, nor even primarily, because philosophical criticism has shown the impossibility of giving a proof of God, but especially

⁶⁹ Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 139–40; emphases in original.

⁷⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 117. Such pious sounding claims have sometimes prompted the imputation of a distinctly Lutheran bent to Kant's philosophy, as, e.g., in the claim that "Kant began where Luther began," and that "his conclusion in *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) would seem to be pure Luther." David M. Hockenbery, "Introduction," in *The Devil's Whore: Reason and Philosophy in the Lutheran Tradition*, ed. Jennier Hockenbery Dragseth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 8.

⁷¹ Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology*, 6.

⁷² Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 84.

because this view of natural theology ignores the truth that the only possible access to God is faith.⁷³

Much more influential in this regard, however, is the early twentieth-century Reformed theologian who consciously developed his thought in antithesis to the "liberal" theology culminating in figures such as Bultmann: Karl Barth (1886–1968). Though championing a "neo-orthodoxy" in opposition to the liberalism of his European contemporaries, Barth was not only out of step with the "old" orthodoxy; he was of one mind with many of his own opponents on the question of natural knowledge, and ostensibly for the same reasons. Not unlike Bultmann's appeal to Luther, for example, Barth will claim that "the Reformation and the teaching of the Reformation churches stand in an antithesis to 'Natural Theology'."⁷⁴

Critics of Barth's position, though, have rightly noted problems with such a claim. The first is simply that Barth himself was well aware that the reformers in fact endorse a natural knowledge of God, and even a minimal place for a natural theology; thus he can only appeal to "the principle of the Reformation rather than to its execution, to a theoretical Reformation rather than the one that actually took place, to what the Reformed Churches ought to have done rather than to what they did in fact do."⁷⁵ As a result,

When Barth says, "[a]s a Reformed theologian I am subject to an ordinance which would keep me away from 'Natural Theology' even if my personal opinions inclined me to it," we must conclude that he speaks as a new brand of Reformed theologian.⁷⁶

Moreover, even those speaking in defense of Barth on this point are willing to acknowledge that it is not so much the reformers who stand behind Barth's position; instead, "Kant remains in the background."⁷⁷ Thus, even in his treatment of Romans 1:20, the text most frequently cited in support of man's natural knowledge of God, Barth lays particular stress on God's invisibility: "What is clearly seen to be indisputable reality is the invisibility of

⁷³ Rudolf Bultmann, "The Problem of 'Natural Theology,'" in *Faith and Understanding*, 1, ed. R.W. Funk, trans. L.P. Smith (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 313.

⁷⁴ Karl Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God according to the Teaching of the Reformation*, trans. J.L.M. Haire and Ian Henderson (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), 8.

⁷⁵ Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology*, 8. Barth's contemporary, the Lutheran theologian Hermann Sasse, presses this point even further. Speaking of Barth's rejection of natural theology, he observes that "neither Lutheran nor Reformed theology has been able to adopt it, and this for the simple reason that the so-called Thomism, which the Reformers are supposed to have retained, was already present in the New Testament." Hermann Sasse, *Here We Stand: Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Adeleide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1979), 166.

⁷⁶ Michael Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology* (Farnley: Ashgate, 2009), 46.

⁷⁷ Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001), 144.

God. . . . And what does this mean but that we can know nothing of God?"⁷⁸ Replacing the rhetorical question with a more emphatic declaration, he bluntly asserts that "[t]he power of God can be detected neither in the world of nature nor in the souls of men."⁷⁹ Firmly believing this to be the case, Barth could only describe himself as "an avowed opponent of all natural theology,"⁸⁰ often expressing this opposition in the most forceful terms.⁸¹

It must be noted, however, that Barth's forceful rejections of both natural knowledge and natural theology rest, at least in part, on his own novel definitions of each. Contrary to theologians of the Reformation as well as the Middle Ages, he refers to natural knowledge, for example, as "a knowledge of which man as man is the master."⁸² More novel still is his definition of natural theology, which he describes as "the doctrine of a union of man with God existing outside God's revelation in Jesus Christ."⁸³ To recognize the novelty of such conceptions is to recognize that Barth rejects what, in fact, none of his orthodox predecessors had acknowledged or defended.⁸⁴ Barth's novelty, though, appears to have gone largely unrecognized, especially among his more recent Reformed successors. Thus, contemporary Christian objections to natural theology are most prominently, though by no means exclusively, formulated and expressed by representatives of the Reformed, or Calvinist, tradition. Theologians and philosophers within this tradition note, for example, that "[c]haracteristic of the Continental Calvinist tradition has been a revulsion

⁷⁸ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 46–7.

⁷⁹ Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 36. In a heated exchange, Barth's fellow Swiss theologian Emil Brunner (1889–1966) appealed to the first two chapters of the very epistle upon which Barth had commented, insisting that "Barth simply refuses to follow St. Paul here." Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising 'Nature and Grace' by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the reply 'No!' by Dr. Karl Barth*, tr. Peter Fraenkel (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 61. Noting Barth's professed adherence to Scripture alone, Brunner further remarks that, since Scripture so consistently asserts that the Creator is known via his creation, "it seems to me a queer kind of loyalty to Scripture to demand that such a revelation should not be acknowledged" (25).

⁸⁰ Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, 6.

⁸¹ See, e.g., Brunner and Barth, *Natural Theology*, 75: "[O]ne can bypass so-called natural theology only as one would pass by an abyss into which it is inadvisable to step if one does not want to fall." Similarly, in the penultimate sentence of the same work: "Only the theology and the church of the antichrist can profit from it" (128).

⁸² Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, 7. Cf., however, Reformed theologian G.C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 61, who rightly acknowledges that even among Roman Catholic theologians natural theology "does not pretend to be an autonomous theology."

⁸³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2/1, ed. G.W. Bromilley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 168; emphasis added.

⁸⁴ That is, Barth attacks "straw men." Brunner hints that Barth may be guilty of a further logical fallacy (the genetic fallacy) when he notes that Barth's rejection of natural theology is also partially predicated on the charge that it is "Thomistic and Roman Catholic" as well as "derived from the Enlightenment." Brunner and Barth, *Natural Theology*, 21.

against arguments in favor of theism,"⁸⁵ and that, with reference to natural theology, "the Reformed attitude has ranged from indifference, through suspicion and hostility, to outright accusations of blasphemy."⁸⁶

Though the stated reasons for this "Reformed objection" vary,⁸⁷ it has accurately been noted that the objection itself has become prominent only in the twentieth century, and especially within the Dutch "neo-Calvinist" school of Reformed theology. In this light, other Reformed theologians have been willing to suggest that "the 'Reformed objection' to natural theology, as characterized by twentieth-century philosophers of religion, simply did not exist before they invented it."⁸⁸ Moreover, some unexpected sources contributing to this "invention" have been suggested. Among modern Reformed critics, "several of them appeal explicitly to Hume and Kant"; indeed, "[t]he dependence on Hume and Kant is one of the striking features of the criticisms of the logic of theistic arguments by Reformed thinkers."⁸⁹ To the extent that this is the case, it further indicates that influential strains of Enlightenment thought were not the culmination of biblical, confessional, and dogmatic affirmations of natural revelation, natural knowledge, and natural theology, but were rather the origins of their modern rejection.

Such a conclusion should not, however, prompt an embrace of the "genetic fallacy"—the rejection of an idea or position solely on the basis of its origins. Though it may indeed be significant that modern rejections of natural theology and the natural knowledge of God most prominently originate among Enlightenment philosophers and Reformed theologians, far more significant from a Lutheran perspective is simply that these positions—whatever their origins—stand in opposition to historical Lutheranism's dogmatic, confessional, and exegetical conclusions. This is not, however, to say that the Enlightenment and Reformed critiques are entirely without merit. Indeed, a number of the points raised especially in these critiques deserve thoughtful consideration by all Christians desirous of appealing to God's natural revelation and man's natural reason in evangelistic endeavors. Following a brief excursus on natural law, then, some of these points will be addressed below.

⁸⁵ Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Introduction," in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 7.

⁸⁶ Alvin Plantinga, "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 54 (1980), 49.

⁸⁷ See, e.g., the brief summaries in Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology*, 5, and Evans, "Apologetics in a New Key," 66.

⁸⁸ Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology*, 45; see also 113–18 and the sources there cited for Sudduth's demonstration that John Calvin himself cannot be claimed as the source of modern Reformed objections.

⁸⁹ Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology*, 171 and 204.

C. Excursus on Natural Law

Though it has not been explicitly addressed in the foregoing, any examination of natural revelation, natural knowledge, and natural theology cannot ignore the related topic of natural law. This relationship, for example, is at least implicitly acknowledged even in Luther's above-noted conception of the natural knowledge of God being a "legal" knowledge of the divine. Similarly, but even more explicitly observing the association of natural knowledge and natural law, the Confessions declare that even the "pagans had something of a knowledge of God from the law of nature."⁹⁰ Thus even modern Lutheran commentators have rightly suggested that there is "an inseparable connection which exists between natural theology and Natural Law."⁹¹ It is precisely for this reason, however, that the patterns of acknowledgement and rejection outlined above repeat themselves in modern Christian discussions of natural law.

Such parallels become immediately evident, for instance, in readings of that New Testament passage most frequently cited as the clearest biblical statement on natural law, which, not coincidentally, appears in the context of St. Paul's broader elucidation of God's natural revelation and man's natural knowledge of him (Romans 1:18–2:16). As with his affirmation of man's natural knowledge of God, Paul's affirmation of the natural law—and man's awareness of it—appears unambiguous. He writes:

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them. (Romans 2:14–15)

Nonetheless, the avoidance of any discussion of natural law in many studies of New Testament ethics would seem to betray a common belief that there is no New Testament acknowledgement of natural law.⁹² More pointedly expressing this belief are assertions such as the following: "That scholars should ever have tried to discover the Platonic or Stoic idea of natural law in the Bible is one of the most amazing facts in the history of theology."⁹³

Despite such intimations, however, the "plain reading" of Paul on natural law—as with Paul on natural knowledge more generally—has been and

⁹⁰ FC SD 5.22.

⁹¹ Robert Hoferkamp, "Natural Law and the New Testament," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 23 (1952), 648.

⁹² Matthew Levering, *Biblical Natural Law: A Theocentric and Theological Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 24. On the following page Levering also notes Barth's influence in this respect, paralleling his influence on questions of natural theology more generally.

⁹³ Otto Piper, "What is Natural Law?" *Theology Today* 2 (1946), 461. As discussed briefly below, however, an important distinction must be recognized between any "fact" and "theory" of natural law. Thus, to say that Scripture contains no particularly "Platonic or Stoic idea of natural law" is not necessarily to say that Scripture refuses to recognize the reality of natural law.

remains the most common, and most warranted, reading. Moreover, and again in common with the biblical evidence for a natural knowledge of God, the clearest and most frequently cited passage is by no means the only biblical evidence to which one might appeal.⁹⁴ Even in the Old Testament, for example, it has been observed that "[t]he nations are condemned in Amos 1:3–2:3 because of their violation of Yahweh's general revelation or natural law."⁹⁵ Similarly, the divine declaration of Deuteronomy 4:6, that even Israel's neighbors would recognize her laws as especially wise and good, is implicitly revealing. As one commentator notes: "that those who are not people of God can make such a determination successfully means that the laws are understood to conform to a standard other than 'God said so'" in his special revelation.⁹⁶

On the basis of the biblical witness, the Lutheran Confessions too profess that "to some extent human reason naturally understands it [i.e., the law] since reason contains the same judgment divinely written on the mind."⁹⁷ Reiterating the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* on this point, and again echoing Romans 2:14–15, the *Formula of Concord* also confesses that "this law of God was written into the heart."⁹⁸ Similarly, the *Formula* not only connects this natural knowledge of the law with the natural knowledge of God by referring to each together, observing, for instance, that fallen men retain the "dim spark of knowledge that a god exists (as Romans 1:19–21, 24, 32 states), or of the teaching of the law,"⁹⁹ as noted above, it also binds them much more intimately by asserting specifically that even pagans have "a knowledge of God from the law of nature."¹⁰⁰

That some knowledge of the natural law is not only a fact of human nature, "written on the heart" of all, but that it thus also serves as a basis for the knowledge of God himself is a point similarly highlighted by Luther. Thus he, too, can write that man has "a left-handed and a partial knowledge

⁹⁴ For overviews of the biblical material, see, e.g., Levering, *Biblical Natural Law*, and David VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 2006).

⁹⁵ Reed Lessing, *Amos* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 94. As Lessing further explains on the following page: "The prophet appeals to an innate order about human conduct that is—or should be—evident to all people as good and right," and "the nations are not denounced for sins that they could not have been expected to recognize."

⁹⁶ Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 137. It is, however, worth noting here that, while even Israel's neighbors can recognize the superiority of her law, that which makes it superior is its divine origin and special revelation.

⁹⁷ Ap 4.7.

⁹⁸ FC Ep 6.2. Roland Ziegler, "Natural Law in the Lutheran Confessions," in *Natural Law: A Lutheran Reappraisal*, ed. Robert C. Baker (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 7, notes that the Confessions never explicitly quote Romans 2:14–15, but that such references to the law being "written on the heart" clearly have this passage in view. See also, e.g., LC 2.67.

⁹⁹ FC SD 2.9.

¹⁰⁰ FC SD 5.22, emphasis added.

of God, based on the law of nature and of Moses.”¹⁰¹ This reference to Moses further highlights a repeated emphasis of Luther, as well as the later Lutheran dogmaticians. A natural knowledge of God was not only confessed by the reformers, but the broad outline of its content was also noted. The same is true with their commentary on natural law: the fact of natural law is not only asserted, but its content is briefly summarized with reference to Moses, that is, the Ten Commandments given to Israel through Moses. It is with reference to these commandments that Luther, for example, can proclaim that “Moses agrees exactly with nature,”¹⁰² and that “the natural laws were never so orderly and well written as by Moses.”¹⁰³ The same point is expressed not only in the Confessions,¹⁰⁴ but also by the later dogmaticians,¹⁰⁵ who can speak of “some knowledge of the divine law pertaining to the remnants of the original divine image.”¹⁰⁶

As with the doctrine of the natural knowledge of God, the teaching of a natural law accessible to all men was deemed by the reformers to be plainly taught in Scripture, and so embraced and asserted in their own exegetical, confessional, and dogmatic works. The question thus arises concerning the reasons for the long neglect of, and even outright hostility towards, this teaching among more recent Protestants, including sometimes even Lutherans. As with the doctrine of the natural knowledge of God, it has been rightly noted that, “[h]owever deeply entrenched the bias against natural law thinking is among Protestant thinkers, it cannot be attributed to the Reformers of the sixteenth century themselves.”¹⁰⁷ As with the natural knowledge of God, “[t]he pressure to abandon the teaching of natural law stemmed not so much from the Reformation as from post-Enlightenment developments in philosophy.”¹⁰⁸ This point being insufficiently recognized, much twentieth-century Protestant thinking

¹⁰¹ Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John*, AE 22:153.

¹⁰² Martin Luther, *How Christians Should Regard Moses* (1525), AE 35:168.

¹⁰³ Martin Luther, *Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments* (1525), AE 40:98. On this point, see also the whole of Luther, *How Christians Should Regard Moses*.

¹⁰⁴ Ap 4.7 (German), notes, e.g., that “natural law, which agrees with the Mosaic Law, or the Ten Commandments, is innate in the heart of all men and is written on it.”

¹⁰⁵ E.g., David Hollaz: “The law of Sinai is a sort of epitome of the natural Law.” Hollaz, *Examen Theologiae Acanmaticae* (1707), quoted in Jaroslav Pelikan, “Natural Theology in David Hollaz,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 18 (1947), 262.

¹⁰⁶ Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici* (1610–1622), in Herman A. Preus and Edmund Smits (eds.), *The Doctrine of Man in Classical Lutheran Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1962), 41; cf. also FC Ep 6.2.

¹⁰⁷ J. Daryl Charles, “Protestants and Natural Law,” *First Things* (December 2006), 33; cf. Carl E. Braaten, “Protestants and Natural Law,” *First Things* (January 1992), 24, who also notes that “none of the confessional documents of the Reformation, neither those of the Lutheran nor of the Calvinist tradition, rejected the notion of natural law.”

¹⁰⁸ Braaten, “Protestants and Natural Law,” 22.

Instead, it is “but a sum of societal conventions that are adapted to serve human needs and urges according to our experiences, which, however, may be superseded by different experiences at some future time.”¹¹⁴ This influential denial of natural law, the cornerstone of much legal and ethical thought from antiquity through early modernity, was especially significant in facilitating the rise to prominence of the more subjective and “utilitarian” moralities representative of the modern era.¹¹⁵

In this light, what became evident with respect to natural theology appears also to be paralleled with regard to natural law: in their rejection of natural law, many contemporary Protestants find themselves, perhaps unwittingly, rejecting the conclusions of Scripture, Confessions, and orthodox dogmatics, and instead aligning themselves with critiques set forth by skeptical Enlightenment philosophers. Yet, as similarly noted above with respect to natural theology, this is not to say that all objections to natural law, especially those raised by concerned Christians, are entirely without merit. As with the critiques of natural theology, these concerns deserve some thoughtful attention by any who would make use of natural law in faithful Christian witness to the contemporary world. Given the “inseparable connection” between natural law and natural theology, then, further concerns regarding the validity of each are given some attention below.

D. The Legitimacy and Limitations of Natural Theology

Though by no means exhaustive, the preceding sections sufficiently reveal that the authors of Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and the orthodox dogmatics are in agreement concerning the legitimacy of natural theology and the related matters of natural revelation, natural knowledge of God, and natural law. At various points, however, their agreement that each also has its limitations was likewise observed. Most often and most emphatically, the biblical, confessional, and dogmatic authors are quite clear that a natural knowledge of God is entirely insufficient for salvation. As was rhetorically asked in the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, “[i]f we can be justified through reason and the works of reason, why do we need Christ or regeneration?”¹¹⁶ Even more plainly, dogmatician Johannes Quenstedt insisted that “[t]he natural knowledge of God is not adequate to secure everlasting life, nor has any mortal ever been redeemed, nor can any one ever be redeemed, by it alone.”¹¹⁷ Because a natural knowledge of God does not and cannot encompass a

¹¹⁴ Heinrich A. Rommen, *The Natural Law: A Study in Legal and Social History and Philosophy*, trans. Thomas R. Hanley (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998), 100.

¹¹⁵ So, e.g., Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), the “father” of utilitarianism, specifically credits Hume’s *Treatise* as decisively demonstrating for him that “the foundations of all virtue are laid in utility.” Quoted in Ernest C. Mosser, “Introduction” to David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 25, emphases in original.

¹¹⁶ Ap 4.12.

¹¹⁷ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica*, quoted in Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 110.

about natural law echoed neither Scripture nor the reformers, but “generally mirrored the Enlightenment culture around it.”¹¹⁸

Still, and again, in common with many modern treatments of the natural knowledge of God, there is no small irony here, as some of those who most forcefully reject natural law do so largely because they deem it “a central doctrine of the Enlightenment,”¹¹⁹ and “one of the principal factors in the formation of the modern spirit.”¹²⁰ It is certainly true that some thinkers of the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment era (as in the pre-Christian era) developed “theories” of natural law different from those of the reformers and other Christian theologians; it is also true that these new “rationalist” theories were less amenable, sometimes even contrary, to orthodox Christianity.¹²¹ Nonetheless, a distinction should be recognized between natural law as a “fact” and any “theory” purporting to explain it; just as with the central Christian doctrine of the atonement, for example, one might object to certain “theories” of the atonement while at the same time clearly confessing and defending the atonement itself as a sure fact.

Moreover, while it is true that some Enlightenment thinkers were developing novel theories of natural law, it is also the case that other influential representatives of the age were consciously attempting to undermine natural law both as theory and as fact. Given the intimate relations between natural theology and natural law, it is perhaps not surprising that David Hume, for instance, would object to the latter as forcefully as he did to the former. He does so most famously in the third book (“Of Morals”) of his *Treatise of Human Nature*, where he develops the argument that moral truths are incapable of being discerned by human reason. It is in this context that he lays down what is sometimes referred to as “Hume’s Law,” often summarized as: “Ought cannot be derived from is.”¹²² That is, according to Hume, morality cannot be ultimately grounded or rationally discovered in any objective, unchanging reality, whether that be the nature of the universe, of man, or of God himself.

¹¹⁸ Charles, “Protestants and Natural Law,” 35.

¹¹⁹ August Lang, “The Reformation and Natural Law,” in *Calvin and the Reformation*, ed. William Park Armstrong (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 93.

¹²⁰ Lang, “The Reformation and Natural Law,” 58. Lang is, however, ecumenical in providing a rationale for his condemnation, noting also on the same page that natural law thinking arose “in Catholicism (and hence in false belief).” As noted above, other Christian rejections of natural law are also sometimes predicated on its supposedly deriving from pre-Christian pagan philosophy.

¹²¹ The Dutch Arminian Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), for example, is often considered to have inaugurated those “modern” and “rationalist” natural law theories that would predominate throughout the Enlightenment; in this context he is often quoted for his claim that the principles of natural law would remain valid “even if we were to suppose (what we cannot suppose without the greatest wickedness) that there is no God.” Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, 3 vols., ed. Richard Tuck (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), “Prolegomena to the First Edition,” 3:1748.

¹²² See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Ernest C. Mosser (New York: Penguin, 1969), 521.

knowledge of the saving gospel—revealed only in Christ and his word—its use and benefits remain limited to what is frequently referred to as God’s “left-hand kingdom,” that which is governed by reason and law.¹¹⁸

Unfortunately, however, critics of natural theology are not incorrect in noting that such distinctions are not always carefully made. Nor are they wrong in suspecting that the use of natural theology is always prone to abuse. This was evident, for example, in the above-noted Deistic reduction of natural theology to a “natural religion” at odds with Christianity. More recently, and more unfortunately, even the Roman Catholic Church has officially denied that the limitations of natural theology and man’s natural knowledge prevent its ever being a saving knowledge. Thus the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) decreed: “Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience.”¹¹⁹ Though the enshrining of this conclusion in an official decree may in some respects be unique to the Roman Catholic Church, the conclusion itself is not.¹²⁰ As the Lutheran Church’s own confessional documents rightly note, given man’s sinful nature, the temptation to abuse what natural knowledge we possess is ever present. The *Apology*, for instance, observes that, “through the law they seek the forgiveness of sins and justification” precisely “because to some extent human reason naturally understands it since reason contains the same judgment divinely written on the mind.”¹²¹

In the light of this propensity of sinful human beings to seek justification on the basis of what may be known by reason alone, it is perhaps unsurprising that one of the most frequent criticisms of a natural theology is that it places too much confidence in human reason, failing to take seriously the damaging effects of sin upon it.¹²² Indeed, even the Lutheran Confessions recognize that one consequence of sin is “being ignorant of God.”¹²³ As detailed above, however, the confessors did not mean to imply by this that any and all knowledge of God is absent in the unbeliever; rather, while the unregenerate might—and should—recognize the existence of God, their beliefs about him will remain

¹¹⁸ On the “two kingdoms,” see below at section IV, B.

¹¹⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution of the Church), 2.16, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 35.

¹²⁰ Thus, already in the second century Justin Martyr (100–c. 165) could propose that “[t]hose who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and men like them.” Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin Martyr*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols., ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 1:178.

¹²¹ Ap 4.7.

¹²² See, e.g., Evans, “Apologetics in a New Key,” 66, and VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*, 3–4.

¹²³ Ap 2.8.

either incomplete when measured against Scripture, or inconsistent with the God revealed in Scripture.¹²⁴

This distinction between the knowledge of God derived from Holy Scripture and that acquired by means of reason alone has prompted many to refer to the latter as mere knowledge of the “God of the philosophers.” Perhaps most famously, the French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) used this language in his “memorial,” where he starkly contrasts the God of “philosophers and scholars” with the “God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob.”¹²⁵ Because the traditional arguments of natural theology can, at best, lead one only to a knowledge of the former, Pascal elsewhere dismisses them as entirely “useless.”¹²⁶ Such a judgment, though, is dependent upon one’s prior conception of the intended “use” of natural theology.¹²⁷ To be sure, insofar as one intends its use to provide a knowledge sufficient for salvation, there is no danger of exaggeration in pressing Pascal’s conclusion even further: natural knowledge in such an instance is *worse* than useless; it is damning. The same may be said of those instances in which the “knowledge” acquired by reason alone is inconsistent with, or contrary to, the revealed testimony of Scripture. Thus, even while acknowledging the fact of man’s natural knowledge of God, the Confessions likewise consistently acknowledge its strict limitations, and even potential dangers if unchecked by the biblical revelation. As previously noted in this regard, the Confessions do not so much stress the lack of natural knowledge about God as they do its falseness. The natural knowledge of God sets forth a distorted picture of Him. It is incapable of showing us the God who justifies and saves from sin.¹²⁸

Whether the conclusions of natural theology are entirely “useless” where they do not contradict Scripture, yet remain (as they must) incomplete by

¹²⁴ It is perhaps worth noting in this context, however, that both the history of heresy and the contemporary plethora of Christian denominations reveal that these shortcomings are not restricted to natural theology alone. The Latin dictum “abusum non tollit usum” (i.e., abuse is no argument against right use) remains applicable, whether in reference to natural theology or biblical theology.

¹²⁵ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A.J. Kralishheimer (New York: Penguin, 1995), 285. Pascal’s “memorial” consists of a handwritten note, apparently describing an ecstatic personal experience, which was posthumously found sewn into the lining of his coat.

¹²⁶ Pascal, *Pensées*, 141 (fragment 449/556).

¹²⁷ Also, to distinguish between the “God of the philosophers” and the God of Scripture as if these necessarily cannot be one in the same is at least potentially problematic for any who grant that a natural knowledge of God may be true knowledge, even if incomplete knowledge. Peter Geach illustrates this point by means of analogy with a Sherlock Holmes murder investigation. On the basis of the evidence at the scene of death, Holmes might rightly conclude that a murder has occurred, and thus a murderer exists. Further, the evidence might allow him to compile a “profile” of the murderer. If such a profile led to the arrest of a particular individual, and if further, more specific evidence confirmed that this individual were indeed the murderer, “it would occur to nobody, I imagine, to distinguish between the abstract murderer of Sherlock Holmes’ deductions and the real live murderer raging in his cell.” Peter Geach, *God and the Soul* (London: Routledge, 1969), 113.

¹²⁸ Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions* (1529–1537), 67.

comparison with it, remains a more contentious question. The incompleteness of natural knowledge is, quite obviously, one of its limitations; whether such a limitation renders it useless, however, again depends upon the manner in which its use is intended. One of David Hume’s many critiques of natural theology, for example, was that its traditional arguments, even if capable of establishing the basic claim of a god’s existence, fail to demonstrate that this god is infinite, perfectly good and wise, or even one being rather than many.¹²⁹ This influential argument, adopted even by many Christian critics of natural theology, asserts, in short, that any argument of natural theology, even if a valid and sound argument, does not prove enough.¹³⁰ The immediately relevant question, however, is: “enough for what?” Hume and others, whose criticism of natural theology is that it provides only an incomplete knowledge of God, are entirely correct if the point is simply that a wholly natural knowledge of God cannot be a knowledge of “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” This indeed is one of natural theology’s limitations. It is, however, a limitation almost universally recognized by natural theology’s proponents.¹³¹ That is to say, the critique loses its force once it is understood that the intent of natural theology is not to demonstrate that whatever is confessed of God on the basis of divine revelation can also be known by reason alone. Indeed, some proponents of natural theology are content with the modest claim that its arguments neither “prove” the most fundamental claim of God’s existence, nor even produce overwhelming evidence in favor of this basic claim, but merely provide “support” for it.¹³² At least in dialogue with an individual who assumes there can be no rational support for belief in the existence of a deity, even such a modest role for natural theology might be deemed useful by some.¹³³

¹²⁹ See especially, e.g., Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Book V.

¹³⁰ See James F. Sennett, “Hume’s Stopper and the Natural Theology Project,” in *In Defense of Natural Theology: A Post-Human Assessment*, ed. James F. Sennett and Douglas Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 82.

¹³¹ See, e.g., C.S. Lewis’ comment at the conclusion of his well-known “moral argument” for the existence of God as set forth in Book I of *Mere Christianity*: “Do not think I am going faster than I really am. I am not yet within a hundred miles of the God of Christian theology.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 25.

¹³² James F. Sennett and Douglas Groothuis, “Hume’s Legacy and Natural Theology,” in *In Defense of Natural Theology: A Post-Human Assessment*, ed. James F. Sennett and Douglas Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 15–16. This language of “support,” calling to mind a buttressing or propping up, may be especially relevant for those confessing that a natural knowledge of God may not only be acquired, but is in fact innate; that is, the arguments of natural theology need not produce a knowledge of God from scratch, but may simply provide support for an already existing, though weak or suppressed, knowledge.

¹³³ Offering an analogy to “candidate moves” in the game of chess, James Sennett suggests the possibility also of a slightly less modest use of natural theology. While still admitting that arguments from reason alone do not prove the existence of the God of Christianity—or even of classical theism—he offers that they might sufficiently convince one of the existence of a divine being with certain characteristics or attributes. If so, such arguments might serve to narrow the range of “candidate gods” to those sharing such characteristics. That is, while not actually dem-

Others, though, object even to this modest role for natural theology, finding it also not only useless, but inherently dangerous. Any appeal to reason, it is claimed, invariably implies that human nature and human reason—rather than God and his word—are ultimately autonomous and authoritative. Any appeal to natural law is thus rejected because “[s]uch a morality is by definition self-sufficient.”¹³⁴ Natural theology is similarly dismissed as being the source of “a knowledge of which man as man is the master.”¹³⁵ Such conclusions, though, appear to misunderstand the manner in which the term “natural” operates in traditionally qualifying such words as law, theology, or knowledge. Unlike the contemporary usage influenced by popular interpretations of modern science, which tends to understand “natural” as entirely excluding the supernatural, the traditional description of a certain law or knowledge as natural in no way implies the rejection of its supernatural origins. With respect to natural law, for instance, the old Lutheran theologians took great pains to emphasize this point. In the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* Melancthon thus refers to the natural law as a “creation or divine ordinance in the human creature,”¹³⁶ and as a judgment “divinely written on the mind.”¹³⁷ Elsewhere he is even more explicit, insisting that “[t]his knowledge is not the product of our own mental powers, but it has been implanted in us by God,”¹³⁸ and that “‘by nature’ really signifies something created by God.”¹³⁹

Nor are confessional Lutherans alone in this understanding. Even Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), sometimes characterized as the medieval “rationalist” *par excellence*, was quite adamant that “[h]uman reason is not, of itself, the rule of things,”¹⁴⁰ and that, “properly speaking, none imposes a law on his own actions.”¹⁴¹ In speaking of natural theology and the natural knowledge of God more generally, Aquinas is similarly eager to admit that:

onstrating the existence of the God of Scripture, natural theology might persuade some that the God of Scripture is far more likely to be the true God than, say, the gods of Hesiod’s *Theogony*.

¹³⁴ John L. McKenzie, S.J., “Natural Law in the New Testament,” *Biblical Research* 9 (1964), 11.

¹³⁵ Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, 7.

¹³⁶ Ap 23.9.

¹³⁷ Ap 4.7.

¹³⁸ Philip Melancthon, *Loc Communes* (1521), in *Melancthon and Bucer*, ed. Wilhelm Pauck (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 50.

¹³⁹ Philip Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans* (1540), trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010), 89.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947–48), First Part of the Second Part, question 91, article 3, ad 2.

¹⁴¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, First Part of the Second Part, question 93, article 5. Thus, one modern commentator can write of Aquinas that “[n]atural law is never (and I must emphasize never) defined in terms of what is first in the (human) mind or first in nature.” Russell Hittinger, “Natural Law and Catholic Moral Theology,” in *A Preserving Grace: Protestants, Catholics, and Natural Law*, ed. Michael Cromartie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 6.

Even as regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered, it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation; because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors.¹⁴²

This is a conclusion substantially echoed by Quenstedt, the orthodox Lutheran. While asserting, on the one hand, “[t]hat the natural knowledge of God is true, is evident from this, that the apostle expressly calls it truth, Rom 1:18 sq., and with the addition, the truth of God, v. 25,” he also proceeds quickly to clarify that “we must distinguish between the natural knowledge of God, considered in and through itself, and in so far as it has united with it imperfection, corruption of reason, and a proclivity to various errors.”¹⁴³

Summarizing, then, with an eye to Quenstedt’s own summary conclusion, the following might fairly be concluded. Because a natural knowledge of God may indeed be, within its limited scope, true knowledge, appeals to natural theology and natural law can be deemed not only legitimate, but also potentially useful. Because even a natural knowledge of God which is true must remain incomplete, however, its usefulness is greatly limited. For attaining salvation it does indeed remain useless—or worse—by itself. Moreover, because any knowledge of God attained by reason alone will invariably be tainted by “imperfection, corruption of reason, and a proclivity to various errors,” it must not only remain incomplete knowledge, but will even quite often be false knowledge.

Even more concisely stated: a natural knowledge of God might *sometimes* be true, will *always* be incomplete, and will *never* suffice for salvation. Thus, where one’s natural “knowledge” of God is false, it must be corrected by Scripture; and even where one’s natural knowledge of God is true, yet incomplete, it must be supplemented by Scripture. Stated in this brief fashion, however, a reasonable question may be posed: If, even in a “best case” scenario, natural theology must give way to Scripture, why engage natural theology at all? Why not appeal immediately to those Scriptures “written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31)? These are the questions which the following section seeks to address.

¹⁴² Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Part I, question 1, article 1.

¹⁴³ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica*, quoted in Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 108.

IV. Natural Knowledge and Christian Witness

*Even those who deny that God is, still they are not ignorant that God is. ~ Johannes Quenstedt*¹⁴⁴

*The reasons why God imparted the external knowledge of Himself to the minds of all men are: (1) For the sake of external discipline, which God wished to be exercised by all men, even the unregenerate; (2) that God might be sought after (Acts 17:27-30); [. . . and . . .] (3) that He might render men inexcusable (Rom. 1:20). ~ Martin Chemnitz*¹⁴⁵

A. Common Ground and Christian Witness

Thus far the examination of the biblical, confessional, and dogmatic treatment of the natural knowledge of God—as well as various historical and contemporary rejections of it—has proceeded by treating the subject largely in, of, and by itself. Consequently, the impression might be given that such an investigation's primary concern is the question of what the non-Christian might come to know of God in, of, and by *himself*. The questions and concerns which gave rise to this study, though, were not prompted by a merely academic curiosity. They were prompted, instead, by the conviction that such a study might have practical "implications for our public witness," and, more specifically, that it might "assist the members of the congregations of the LCMS in their witness."¹⁴⁶

Before proceeding to a discussion of such practical implications and potential assistance, however, it is worth pausing briefly to suggest that these emphases on natural knowledge in the specific context of Christian witness perhaps shed further light on some of the confusions and contentions noted in previous sections. Insofar as the focus remains on the abstract question of what knowledge might be naturally attainable by a hypothetical unbeliever entirely ignorant of God's special revelation in Scripture, answers may well vary; but they will remain "academic" and "impractical." That is, the orthodox Christian will conclude that whatever knowledge is naturally attainable by the solitary unbeliever is impractical, indeed useless, for acquiring salvation. As the concerns prompting this study make plain, however, and as most treatments of natural theology regularly reveal, attention is not primarily focused on the solitary unbeliever in, of, and by himself. It is instead focused especially on those unbelievers with whom Christians are in dialogue and to whom Christians witness. In this context, it might be said that some awareness

¹⁴⁴ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica*, Part 1, chapter 6, section 2, question 1 (Leipzig, 1715), 373-74.

¹⁴⁵ Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici* (1591), quoted in Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 110.

¹⁴⁶ Resolution 3-04A, 2007 Convention Proceedings, 121.

of God's natural revelation, some understanding of the natural knowledge of God and his law, and some facility with natural theology are indeed potentially useful—not in the first instance for the unbeliever, but for the Christian engaged in witnessing to him or her. Each might, in such a view, be seen in some respects as "tools" in the hands of the Christian evangelist. The utility of any tool, however, presupposes its proper use. To press the analogy further, the right use of any tool further presumes an awareness of its intended purpose, its inherent capacities, and its inevitable limitations.

As the above pages have consistently highlighted that the most significant limitation of natural theology is that a natural knowledge of God does not, and cannot, extend to a knowledge of the gospel, it will thus be clear that gospel proclamation *per se* is not the immediately intended purpose of natural theology. Instead, in the context of Christian witness, the purpose of appeals to natural revelation, natural law, and natural theology have traditionally been understood as preliminary or preparatory to the proclamation and elucidation of the gospel.¹⁴⁷ Often, for example, this preparatory task is described in terms of an attempt to establish "common ground" or a "point of contact" between the Christian and non-Christian.

Though the apostles, and Christ himself, are never described in the pages of the New Testament as engaging in evangelistic witness to those who might be recognized as atheists or even agnostics in modern terms, it remains clear that their witness to non-Christians regularly proceeds from some assumed or established common ground. Apostolic testimony in the Hebraic milieu, for instance, frequently began by meeting the Jews "where they were"—quite literally in those cases of proclamation within Mediterranean synagogues, but also more generally in appeals to the shared authority of the Hebrew scriptures and the shared belief in a promised Messiah.¹⁴⁸ Though the analogue with natural theology here is obviously inexact—the Old Testament being specially, rather than naturally, revealed, and the expectation of a Messiah being predicated on this special revelation—it is nonetheless noteworthy that the apostles regularly proceed from those authorities and beliefs acknowledged by their audiences, and which they often hold in common with their audiences. Further, this common ground often allows the apostolic proclamation to progress logically and rhetorically from that which a given audience *does* know to that which it therefore *should* know.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ E.g., in a letter explaining the intent of the BBC radio broadcasts which would eventually become, in published form, the early chapters of *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis described his argument for and from a natural knowledge of the law as "*praeparatio evangelica* rather than *consequium*." C.S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis*, ed. Walter Hooper, 3 vols (San Francisco: Harper/San Francisco, 2004), 2:484. As will be noted below, however, to speak of "preparation" need not imply a necessary chronological priority.

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, Peter's proclamation at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36), Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-35), and Paul's testimony in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13-43).

¹⁴⁹ The sermons of Peter in Jerusalem and Paul in Pisidian Antioch are again illustrative. Each refers, for example, to King David's confession that "you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or

Especially illustrative and so often cited in this regard is the apostle Paul's Areopagus proclamation (Acts 17:22-31), which, addressed to those who did not recognize the authority of God's special revelation, is also a closer analogue to much modern Christian evangelism. Before further examination of this proclamation itself, however, two preliminary considerations deserve recognition. The first is simply that, while the Areopagus speech itself begins "where the Athenians are" (namely, with reference to their own gods), this is not the point at which Paul's preaching in Athens more broadly begins. Rather, it had begun with Paul's proclamation, in the synagogue and in the marketplace, of Christ and his bodily resurrection from death—a point on which he and his more philosophically inclined hearers decidedly did not share common ground (cf. Acts 17:18 and 17:32). It is the very peculiarity of this preaching which prompts some among Paul's audience to request that he speak to them further, prompting his later Areopagus address. This order of events is significant in that it makes plain that appeals to the non-Christian's own beliefs, assumptions, or authorities, while potentially helpful, need not be given any chronological priority in Christian witness. As Paul himself does in Athens, one might—and perhaps even should—begin with the proclamation of the gospel itself, strange as it may sound to one's hearers. As curiosity is piqued, or as objections arise, a shift to some recognized point of contact might then be deemed appropriate.

A further preliminary point deserving recognition is that, even in Paul's own establishment of a point of contact with his audience, there is no indication that all of the Athenian beliefs to which he initially appeals are deemed by the apostle to be either true or good. Quite the contrary; Luke specifically records that, upon observing the many idols of Athens, Paul was "provoked" (Acts 17:16). And yet it is also noteworthy that, in addressing his idolatrous audience, he does not immediately, or at all, appeal to biblical prohibitions against graven images (e.g., Ex. 20:4) or to the biblical confession that God is one (e.g., Deut. 6:4). Rather than quoting that special revelation which his audience neither possesses nor recognizes as authoritative, Paul instead highlights that which his hearers already do know and accept.

With regard to the content of Paul's address itself, that which he emphasizes as already known and understood by his hearers is readily apparent. They accept, for instance, the fundamental importance of religion in general (v. 22). They understand that they nevertheless lack some knowledge of the divine, as evidenced by their altar "To the unknown god" (v. 23). They understand that there exists a deity in whom "we live and move and have our being," and that "we are indeed his offspring" (v. 28). Thus quoting their own authors to them, Paul effectively transitions from what his non-Christian hearers do know to what they therefore *should* know: "Being then God's offspring," he

let your holy one see corruption" (Psalm 16:10), while also observing that David "both died and was buried" (Acts 2:29), that he "was laid with his fathers and saw corruption" (Acts 13:36). Because their audiences *did* know these things, they also *should* have known that David spoke prophetically of another.

proclaims, "we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man" (v. 29). Revealing their logically untenable conceptions of the divine, Paul can then call their "knowledge" what it in fact is: "ignorance" (v. 30). He can thus call upon them to repent of their false worship, and can finally draw their attention once again to the "man whom [God] has appointed," and through whom "he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (v. 31).

If such apostolic approaches to Christian witness are recognized at least as exemplary—though not necessarily normative—the question raised for the contemporary Christian concerns the manner in which some common ground or point of contact might be established with modern unbelievers. While a virtually infinite number of specific contexts in which personal evangelism might take place will preclude any attempt to address such a question with specific details, some general observations might be offered on the basis of Scripture itself, as well as in light of the broader contours of modern culture.

Most fundamentally, though perhaps least obviously, the biblical attestation of a universally possessed natural knowledge of God reveals that there exists already, regardless of context, a commonly shared knowledge of God's existence. It is this biblical testimony, for instance, that informs the assertion of Johannes Quenstedt quoted above: "Even those who deny that God is, still they are not ignorant that God is."¹⁵⁰ It would of course hardly be prudent in conversation with professed atheists, for example, to imply that they are simply lying about their disbelief. Nonetheless, the Christian's trust in the scriptural confession that all men do in some respect and to some extent recognize God's existence—and only succeed in denying it by actively suppressing this truth (Rom. 1:18)—might inspire some confidence in the often daunting task of sharing one's faith with professed unbelievers. As even one recent survey of scientific studies examining the belief-forming mechanisms of the human mind concludes, "when atheism does battle with supernaturalism over the hearts and minds of people, the playing field is not level from the beginning."¹⁵¹ It is also noteworthy in this regard that some prominent skeptics seem to recognize this as true. One skeptic laments, for example, that "our brains seem predisposed" and are "entirely accustomed to the idea that complex elegance is an indicator of premeditated, crafted design," such

¹⁵⁰ A similar claim is made, e.g., by dogmatician David Hollaz (1648-1713), who refers to atheists being so "not speculatively, but practically." That is, they may live as if there is no God, but to some extent they still understand that there is a God. Hollaz, *Examen Theologiae Academicæ*, quoted in Pelikan, "Natural Theology in David Hollaz," 260.

¹⁵¹ Justin L. Barrett, *Born Believers: The Science of Children's Religious Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 218-19. Though Barrett provides no information on the religion (or lack thereof) of the various researchers whose work he surveys and summarizes, it is worth emphasizing that the many studies he cites appear in peer-reviewed academic journals not typically known to be biased in favor of religious belief.

that the evidences of the natural world “overwhelmingly impress us with the appearance of design as if by a master watchmaker.”¹⁵²

On a practical level, the recognition that even the professed unbeliever does in fact possess some innate knowledge of God will serve as a reminder that the Christian evangelist need not “prove” God’s existence. Understanding that a natural knowledge of God is being willfully suppressed, the Christian might instead focus his or her attention on questioning and challenging those beliefs which serve to suppress this knowledge. In this regard, too, it is noteworthy that even some prominent atheists can be quite candid about their own motives for denying God’s existence, speaking in terms that come close to admissions of being willing actively to suppress belief. One atheist writes, for example: “I want atheism to be true.... It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God and, naturally, hope that I’m right in my belief. It’s that I hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that.”¹⁵³

Moreover, one should not lose sight of the fact that, despite recent growth in the number and percentage of those professing to be atheists or agnostics, and the increased attention they have received in the media, the vast majority even of non-Christians in America do in fact acknowledge God’s existence.¹⁵⁴ Again, therefore, the task of establishing common ground need not be to “prove” the existence of God. Most opportunities for Christian witness will instead occur in conversation with those who, not unlike the Athenians of Paul’s day, readily profess belief in a god—which might then, as it did for Paul, serve as a starting point for proclaiming the nature and work of the true God.

What has been said above concerning the natural knowledge of God is no less true with regard to man’s natural knowledge of the law. That is, man’s innate knowledge of the law, even when suppressed or distorted, constitutes some common ground shared by Christians and non-Christians alike. This biblical confession, highlighted especially by St. Paul (Rom. 2:14–15), informs, for example, Luther’s observation that, “if the natural law were not written and inscribed by God on the heart, one would have to preach for a long time before the conscience was struck.”¹⁵⁵ Though the manner in which this natural knowledge of the law might be appealed to in Christian witness will receive further, and more specific, attention below, it is worth noting here that the bare

¹⁵² Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: Norton, 1985), xii, 21. Indeed, this is one of the conclusions suggested by recent scientific studies, that children as well as “adults, even scientifically trained ones, possess a bias to favor purpose-based explanations,” and that “we do not simply outgrow the tendency to see purpose in the world but have to learn to tamp it down through formal education, and even then, it comes sneaking out when we are not paying careful attention.” Barrett, *Born Believers*, 54, 55.

¹⁵³ Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130.

¹⁵⁴ Pew Research Center and The Pew Forum on Religions and Public Life, “Nones” On the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation (Released 9 October 2012), 9, 22, available online at http://www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Religious_Affiliation/Unaffiliated/NonesOnTheRise-full.pdf.

¹⁵⁵ Martin Luther, *Sermon on the Second Book of Moses* (1 October 1525), WA 16:447.

relevant in attempts to establish common ground with unbelievers. This is especially the case since, as one atheist himself rightly notes, “[o]ne of the things atheists tend to believe is that modern science is on their side, whereas theism is in conflict with science.”¹⁶² Precisely because this is the case, those otherwise tempted to avoid discussions of religious belief, or to dismiss such belief as inherently irrational and lacking any empirical evidence, might be more amenable to dialogue in cases where such discussion is framed, at least partially or initially, by common scientific concerns such as evidence and induction, verification or falsification, and inference to the best explanation. Not only is science itself—popularly perceived as an unbiased and objective method of establishing certain truths—a potential point of contact between Christians and non-Christians, but it might also serve to reveal or establish further common ground. In revealing, for example, that “the natural architecture of human minds in ordinary environments makes belief in gods entirely expected,”¹⁶³ scientific studies provide even non-biblical support for the Christian confession of man’s innate knowledge of God. Similarly, empirical data derived from research in such disciplines as biology, astronomy, and physics might prove fruitful conversation starters, raising the question of whether the apparent “design” of the universe suggests, or even requires, the existence of a transcendent designer.¹⁶⁴

Again, this brief summary of potential “points of contact” with the unbeliever is only suggestive, and by no means exhaustive. The reference to science, rather than the arts, for example, is informed simply by the popular esteem in which science is held, and should certainly not be taken to imply that one is unlikely to find some common ground with reference to the literary or visual arts. Further, it bears repeating that even the successful establishment of some common ground or point of contact—while sometimes difficult enough in itself—remains merely a means to an end. A “legal knowledge” of God, like a knowledge of God’s law itself, remains preliminary to or preparatory for the proclamation of the gospel, which will remain the ultimate goal of any distinctly and uniquely Christian witness.

B. Christian Witness and the Two Kingdoms

Because a natural knowledge of God and his law does not and cannot include a knowledge of the saving gospel, its proper use will remain restricted to what Lutherans have traditionally called the “left-hand” kingdom (or

¹⁶² Thomas Nagel, “A Philosopher Defends Religion,” *The New York Review of Books* (27 September 2012), 62.

¹⁶³ Barrett, *Born Believers*, 4.

¹⁶⁴ The famous philosopher Antony Flew (1923–2010), for example, attributed his late conversion from atheism to theism to such a line of inquiry. See Gary R. Habermas, “My Pilgrimage from Atheism to Theism: An Exclusive Interview with Former British Atheist Professor Antony Flew,” *Philosophia Christi* 6 (2004), 197–211.

fact of such a knowledge is increasingly recognized even by non-Christians, and on non-revelatory grounds. “Recent scientific research on moral reasoning,” for instance, “is beginning to converge on the idea that, from childhood, people have a basic set of moral instincts, a grammar, or intuitions” and that “[a]ll normally developing people have similar, basic moral intuitions.”¹⁵⁶

As the above reference to moral “reasoning” suggests, another point of contact between the Christian and the non-Christian is the shared human possession of reason itself. Given the Lutheran theological tradition’s willingness to describe human reason both as a “bright light”¹⁵⁷ and as a “dim spark,”¹⁵⁸ however, particular contexts will necessarily dictate the extent and respects to which appeals to logic or reason are appropriate in Christian witness. Thus, for example, the Christian evangelist will want constantly to be aware that, “[t]hrough the wisdom of the Gospel is a higher gift than human reason, it does not alter or nullify the God-implemented intelligence of the latter.”¹⁵⁹

Because this is the case, and because it is both the biblical and Lutheran confession that men not only possess an innate knowledge of God, but might also, by use of their reason, acquire some knowledge of God’s existence and attributes, there will be occasions on which it is entirely appropriate to appeal to the skeptics’ own rational faculties and to the evidence available to their senses. Indeed, such appeals may in some cases be especially appropriate not only because the capacity for reason is shared by all human beings, but also because it is often a pronounced conceit of skeptics that they are especially rational and that, conversely, Christians and others embrace a belief in God only because they are insufficiently so.¹⁶⁰ This is apparent, to cite only one example, in the suggestion of some prominent atheists and agnostics that they dub themselves the “brights,”¹⁶¹ in not-so-subtle contrast to their allegedly “dim” religious contemporaries.

Finally, and particularly in the context of the modern western world, the particular species of reasoning that is scientific might also be particularly

¹⁵⁶ Barrett, *Born Believers*, 121. Significantly, on the same page Barrett also notes: “One of these basic moral intuitions appears to be the belief that moral codes are absolute and unchangeable, whereas other norms are arbitrary and could be changed.”

¹⁵⁷ Luther, *Lectures on Jonah*, AE 19:54.

¹⁵⁸ FC SD 2.9. On this point, also see Tom G.A. Hardt, “Natural Knowledge of God and Natural Law According to the Teaching of the Evangelical Lutheran Church,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 19 (1979), 8.

¹⁵⁹ Martin Luther, *Sermon on the Seventh Sunday after Trinity*, in *Sermons of Martin Luther*, 8 vols., ed. J.N. Lenker (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 8:159.

¹⁶⁰ This is a point being made by critics of Christianity already as early as the second century, when, e.g., the Roman pagan Celsus (c. 177) asserted that Christians “are able to convince only the foolish, dishonorable and stupid, and only slaves, women and little children” of their religious claims. Celsus, *On the True Doctrine: A Discourse Against the Christians*, trans. R. Joseph Hoffmann (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 73.

¹⁶¹ See Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007), 5.

realm) of God, rather than God’s “right-hand” kingdom.¹⁶⁵ That is, natural knowledge finds its proper home in that realm in which God rules by means of reason, law, and those orders, institutions, and vocations through which he secures and preserves the penultimate good of temporal human flourishing. It has no proper home, however, in that realm in which God rules by means of the gospel alone, and where he communicates this gospel only by means of word and sacrament, for the sake of the ultimate good of the sinner’s salvation. This, though, is not to say that natural revelation and the knowledge it provides, while situated in the left-hand kingdom, cannot in important ways beneficially serve the gospel and, thus, the right-hand kingdom of God.¹⁶⁶ With reference to man’s natural knowledge of the law, for instance, it has been said with only slight exaggeration that, “[t]here is no salvation in this knowledge, but without it life would come to a halt. There would be nothing to be saved.”¹⁶⁷ Thus, as noted at the head of this section, the early Lutheran dogmatician Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586) could name as the first of those “reasons why God imparted the external knowledge of Himself to the minds of all men,” the divine concern for “external discipline, which God wished to be exercised by all men, even the unregenerate.”¹⁶⁸ The maintenance of external discipline by which civil society is preserved, viewed in light of left-hand concerns, may be deemed a good in and of itself. Because the church’s proclamation of the gospel takes place within society, however, it, too, is well served by the establishment and preservation of a just and well-ordered society.

The Christian, therefore, as a citizen simultaneously residing in both of God’s two kingdoms, will necessarily be engaged by and with the concerns and ends of each. The immediately relevant question thus becomes: In what respects might the natural revelation of God and his law be of practical assistance in Christian witness which seeks to serve the goals or purposes of both the right- and left-hand realms of God?

Though no logical priority necessitates treating the concerns of the left-hand realm first, it is with respect to temporal and civic affairs that

¹⁶⁵ For the development of Luther’s own thinking about the two kingdoms or two realms, see, e.g., Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 314–324. For a concise and accessible introduction to its broader contemporary application, see, e.g., Gene Veith, *The Spirituality of the Cross: The Way of the First Evangelists* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999), 91–106.

¹⁶⁶ By way of analogy, e.g., knowledge of a foreign language is not saving knowledge of the gospel; language acquisition is thus understood to reside in the “left-hand” realm. And yet, especially for a foreign missionary, knowledge of the relevant language will greatly facilitate proclamation of the gospel. At an even more mundane level, keeping the churchyard mown saves no one; but allowing it to become an overgrown eyesore might dissuade visitors from attending, and thus hearing the gospel which does save.

¹⁶⁷ Carl E. Braaten, “A Response,” to Russell Hittinger, “Natural Law and Catholic Moral Theology,” in *A Preserving Grace: Protestants, Catholics, and Natural Law*, ed. Michael Comarrie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 37.

¹⁶⁸ Chemnitz, *Loco Theologici*, quoted in Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 110.

the Lutheran Confessions themselves most frequently address the subject of man's natural knowledge of God and his law. The *Formula of Concord* acknowledges, for example, that "[r]eason and the free will are capable of 'living honorably to a certain extent externally.'"¹⁶⁹ It can further assert that those "works that belong to the maintenance of outward discipline are also demanded of the unbelievers and unconverted and are performed by them," noting also that "such works are praiseworthy in the world's sight and are rewarded by God in this world with temporal benefits."¹⁷⁰ The *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* not only speaks similarly with regard to natural reason's capability, "to a certain extent," to discern and direct right human behavior, but also with respect both to God's requirement of this "righteousness of reason" and his rewarding it with temporal benefits.¹⁷¹ Indeed, so insistent are the confessors, when addressing the concerns of the left-hand realm, that man's natural reason is capable of and sufficient for discerning the law, they can even rebuff as "insane" the suggestion that civil society be governed by those laws specially revealed in Scripture.¹⁷² Instead, they can go so far as to confess that "Aristotle wrote so eruditely about social ethics that nothing further needs to be added."¹⁷³

Even outside of the confessional documents, the reformers consistently speak in a similar fashion, occasionally doing so even more emphatically. Speaking of the natural law, for example, Melancthon can write of its principles that "these constitute the ground rules for all human activity,"¹⁷⁴ and that "[e]xternal life is to be regulated according to this natural light."¹⁷⁵ Likewise speaking of temporal matters, Luther can also write that here one "needs no light but that of reason," for this "natural light is sufficient."¹⁷⁶ With reference to Moses, he can even be so bold as to assert that, "[w]here he gives the commandments, we are not to follow him except so far as he agrees with the natural law."¹⁷⁷

The apparent redundancy of the multiple quotations in the preceding two paragraphs is intentional, and is meant to emphasize the consistent Lutheran testimony on this point. Such emphasis is necessary because this point is frequently misunderstood or even rejected by contemporary Christians. The fear, among some, is that "promoting natural law to the role of rule and stan-

dard in public life means relegating Scripture [to a secondary status] and so potentially jeopardizing its sufficiency and *sola Scriptura*."¹⁷⁸ The language of *sola scriptura*, as well as that of Scripture's sufficiency, certainly resonates with the heirs of the Lutheran reformation; and so Lutherans, too, may intuitively share similar concerns regarding appeals to natural law rather than to the text of Scripture. As the above quotations from the Confessions and their authors reveal, however, such concerns need not be troubling where God's left-hand realm is in view. Scripture alone reveals the source of man's salvation, and for this revelation of salvation Scripture alone is sufficient. For the ordering of life in the civil realm, however, appeals to Scripture, while not at all illegitimate, are not, strictly speaking, necessary. Here, Luther can note, not only does one need "no light but that of reason"; he can in the same context observe that in some obvious respects even Scripture itself is not sufficient for guiding and directing temporal affairs: "Hence God does not in the Scriptures teach us how to build houses, to make clothing, to marry, to wage war, to sail the seas, and so on."¹⁷⁹

In this light, then, the distinctive Lutheran teaching of God's two realms provides a theological justification for appeals to human reason and to the natural law which it is capable of discerning. Further, though, as a merely practical matter, such appeals not only hold out possibilities not afforded by reference to special revelation; they might also avoid some potential pitfalls attending the explicit use of Scripture in attempts to order public life in the left-hand realm. Most fundamentally, social or political positions grounded in reason, for example, proceed from a common ground shared by Christians and non-Christians alike.¹⁸⁰ Conversely, given the fact not only of contemporary religious pluralism, but also of increasing irreligion, appeals to Scripture are easily ignored or dismissed by those not recognizing the authority of the Bible or adhering to any specific doctrines derived from it.¹⁸¹ [See *Human Beginnings: Faith or Science?* on the following page]

¹⁷⁸ Dan Strange, "Not Ashamed! The Sufficiency of Scripture for Public Theology," *Themelios* 36 (August 2011), 251.

¹⁷⁹ Luther, *Epiphany Sermon*, in *Sermons of Martin Luther*, 6:319. For this same reason one should be wary of well-intended but often misguided attempts to establish "biblical principles" for all manner of temporal concerns and endeavors, especially if such principles are assumed to be the best or most useful simply because they are mentioned in Scripture.

¹⁸⁰ Thus, e.g., atheist libertarian Nat Hentoff can describe himself as adamantly opposed to abortion "not for religious reasons, but because I'm an atheist who can read biology." Nat Hentoff, "Election Day," *Jewish World Review* (3 November 2012), available online at <http://www.jewishworldreview.com/cols/hentoff100312.php3>.

¹⁸¹ Thus, for example, certain positions on the contentious questions of abortion or marriage are sometimes characterized and then dismissed as exclusively "religious" positions. Summarizing the conclusions of the Pew Research Center's 2012 study, "None," *On the Rise*, one commentator notes that this is made especially easy because, increasingly, those unaffiliated with any religion "have an antagonistic attitude toward religious institutions. They tend to think that churches are too focused on rules.... They also think that the churches are too involved in politics.... They would like to see religion [for all practical purposes, this means

Human Beginnings: Faith or Science?

Immediately upon seating herself at the cafe table, across from new friend and fellow medical student Sally, an obviously agitated Jane blurted out, "Why do you Christians insist upon imposing your religious values on the rest of us?"

Caught off guard, Sally could only respond, "I have no idea what you're talking about."

Jane explained that, while driving across town for their weekly coffee and study session, she had passed a women's medical clinic, outside of which were gathered a number of individuals. Some knelt in what was obviously prayer, while others stood with placards reading, *God Is Pro-Life, Thou Shalt Not Kill*, and, more cryptically, *Psalm 139:19*. "Whatever you, personally, feel about it," she continued, "abortion is perfectly legal in this country, the Supreme Court has upheld this—and, I might add, the separation of church and state—on numerous occasions, and so I simply don't understand why you Christians keep insisting that it's wrong and should be prohibited just because you think your Bible says so."

"Ah," replied Sally, "I see. Well, then, let me try to explain, and perhaps clarify. First, you made reference to the separation of church and state. You of course realize, though, that this idea, or something like it, appears in the same constitutional amendment that protects the free exercise of religion. So, just as you believe women have a 'right to choose,' those individuals you saw believe—correctly—that they have a right to express their religious views."

"Yes, of course they do," Jane acknowledged; "but they don't have a right to impose them on people who don't share those views."

"No, you're right," Sally granted; "though I don't think that simply praying, or holding a sign, imposes anything at all. Nor, actually, do I think that the views held by those people—or myself—are necessarily or exclusively religious views."

"Of course they are! Why else would they be quoting the Bible?"

"Well," said Sally, "I will grant you that I myself don't think quoting the Bible is the best approach to this debate. But certainly you can see that at least one of those signs you mentioned, *Thou Shalt Not Kill*, expresses a belief that's not unique to Christians, or to the religious more generally. I mean, the courts have also pretty consistently upheld that murder is wrong, and so prohibited."

"Okay, sure; but abortion simply isn't murder, and the only reason you Christians think it is has to do with your pre-scientific Bible saying that life begins at conception."

"Well, yes, perhaps some Christians do base their views of life on what the Bible says. But, again, the view that life begins at conception certainly isn't a uniquely Christian or even religious view. In fact, you'll cover this in some detail next year in embryology." As Sally said this she was already retrieving from her bag the weighty eighth edition of the textbook assigned by her own instructor, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology*. "Here," she said, flipping through the first few pages, "on page fifteen, Moore and Persaud write, 'human development begins at fertilization,' and that this 'marked the beginning of each of us as a unique individual.' That's not a religious view, but a scientific one—and a nearly unanimous scientific one. In fact, the very title of another textbook I was reading, Harrison's, Golbus's, and Filly's *The Unborn Patient: Prenatal Diagnosis and Treatment*, just about says it all. And the authors open their first chapter in the same vein, when they write that 'the fetus is a patient, an individual.' Because this actually is the medical consensus, even someone like Princeton's Peter Singer, who openly advocates for abortion, admits in his own textbook on *Practical Ethics* that 'there is no doubt that from the first moments of its existence an embryo conceived from human sperm and egg is a human being.'"

Jane was quiet for a moment, before asking simply, "Really? Why have I never heard this before? Why do I get the impression from both pro-lifers and pro-choicers that abortion is a religious issue?"

"It's not my place to comment on either side's motives," replied Sally. "But really, behind all the rhetoric from both camps, the issue is quite simple. Whatever religious agreements or disagreements people might have, the issue of abortion comes down to premises that aren't explicitly religious at all, and that all reasonable and informed individuals should be able to agree on: the unjustified taking of human life is wrong, and that which comes into being with human conception is a human life."

To which Jane, before placing her coffee order, merely replied, "Hmmm..."

However lamentable this may be for those who *do* recognize that Scripture is authoritative, the logic which prompts such dismissals is readily understandable. It is the very same logic by which Christians dismiss Islamic prohibitions on the eating of pork, for instance, or the prohibition on blood transfusions among Jehovah's Witnesses.¹⁸² As one author has concisely summarized the state of affairs outlined above:

if the principles of the Law of Nature are accessible to our unbelieving fellow citizens because they are written on those citizens' hearts, then we have a basis for talking with them about the moral concerns relevant to the creation of [civil and criminal] law. Without this basis, we are left with the prospect of pummeling these unbelievers with biblical texts whose authority they do not accept—a strategy of communication with little prospect of success and, more importantly, little correspondence with New Testament examples of how the apostles communicated with Gentile unbelievers.¹⁸³

The "prospect of pummeling these unbelievers with biblical texts" is not, however, the only alternative to dialogue and debate proceeding from the natural law discernible by all rational human beings. To the extent that these biblical appeals are judged ineffective, the Christian might simply be tempted to retreat into "quietism" and to withdraw altogether from the public square. This, though, is hardly a more desirable alternative. Insofar as "Christian witness" might be understood not only as witness that is Christian (that is, biblical and evangelical), but also as witness *by* Christians (even without reference to Scripture or gospel), it would be a tragedy simply to surrender discussions of the common good and a well ordered public life to the unregenerate. The reason for this is to be found even in the very context of Scripture's confession that the unregenerate are not without a natural knowledge of the law. Just as St. Paul declares that all men possess a natural knowledge of God, and yet suppress this knowledge, so too does he write the same regarding the natural knowledge of the law: "Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them" (Rom. 1:32). Similarly, in the very same context in which Luther can rather shockingly claim that Moses is not to be followed "except so far as he agrees with the natural law," he also insists that "Moses agrees exactly with nature,"¹⁸⁴ and, elsewhere, that "the natural laws were

Christianity) exercise less influence over society." R.R. Reno, "The New Secular Majority," *First Things* (December 2012), 4.

¹⁸² As each of these teachings is ostensibly supported with reference even to the Old Testament writings accepted by Christians, such examples also highlight the fact that quoting Scripture to establish moral norms is not entirely unproblematic even with respect to those who fully accept the authority of Scripture. That is to say, the matter is not only one of biblical authority, but also of interpretation and application.

¹⁸³ Timothy L. Hall, "A Law for All Seasons," *Touchstone* (June 2009), 29.

¹⁸⁴ Luther, *How Christians Should Regard Moses*, AE 35:168.

never so orderly and well written as by Moses.”¹⁸⁵ Some practical implications of such conclusions follow. Freed from the curse of the law by Christ’s fulfillment of it (Gal. 3:13), the Christian need not fearfully attempt to suppress his or her knowledge of the law; indeed, enlightened and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, the Christian recognizes the law to be “holy and righteous and good” (Rom. 7:12) and so can delight in it (Rom. 7:22). Further, acknowledging the divine inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture, the Christian can there find the law much more clearly and plainly revealed than it might otherwise be to reason and conscience alone. As a result, the Christian’s high regard for the law, and clearer understanding of its demands, uniquely motivates as well as equips him or her to make especially beneficial contributions to the public discussion of public life and the public good—even if doing so without explicit reference to what might be dismissed as “private” religious beliefs.¹⁸⁶

Within the left-hand kingdom, and for the sake of its being well ordered, there is yet another respect in which Christian witness which appeals explicitly to Scripture or to specifically Christian doctrines might have unintended but potentially detrimental effects—not only for the maintenance of the left-hand realm itself, but also for the populating of God’s right-hand realm. Put simply, appeals to biblical law, for the sake of temporal concerns, risk reinforcing the popular perception of Christianity’s being no different from other religions, that is, consisting essentially of certain rules, regulations, or commandments which must be followed to gain divine favor. To the extent that the unregenerate’s encounters with Christianity consist of Christians proclaiming only the law, they might understandably (and not incorrectly) conclude that the law proclaimed by Christians differs little from the law proclaimed in other religions or philosophies. They might therefore conclude, again understandably (though here erroneously), that Christianity itself differs little from other religions or philosophies. Thus, they may comfort themselves with the belief that, all religions being essentially the same, and all religions being defined essentially by that civil righteousness attainable by good works, Christianity is just as true (or false) as any other religion, and so need not be given any further investigation or consideration.

An awareness of the manner in which the proclamation of law, in and for the sake of the left-hand kingdom, might also have implications which touch on the concerns of the right-hand kingdom now allows some more specific focus on the manner in which God’s natural revelation of himself and his

¹⁸⁵ Luther, *Against the Heavenly Prophets*, AE 40:98.

¹⁸⁶ For the manner in which this might be done with respect to the controversial issue of abortion, see, e.g., Peter Kreeft, *The Unaborted Socrates* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983), and Corey D. Maas, “Natural Science, Natural Rights, and Natural Law: Abortion in Historical Perspective,” in *Natural Law: A Lutheran Reappraisal*, ed. Robert C. Baker (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 221–234. With respect to the similarly contentious issue of same-sex marriage, see, e.g., Sherif Girgis, Robert George, and Ryan T. Anderson, “What Is Marriage?” *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 34 (2010), 245–287, and their expanded argument in *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York: Encounter, 2012).

law might serve not only the interests of the left-hand realm, but might also beneficially serve the right-hand realm’s primary concern—the proclamation of the gospel.

Recalling that the vast majority of non-Christians in the United States are not in fact atheists, or even agnostics, but instead do recognize the existence of God, it is not surprising that “God-talk” is frequently heard even in public discussion of those concerns related to the left-hand realm. It has been pointed out, for example, that no American president has failed to make reference to God in his inaugural address.¹⁸⁷ Such invocations of God are part and parcel of what is often described as America’s “civil religion.” And while it was suggested above that there may be good reasons for Christians, when addressing strictly temporal concerns, to avoid appeals specifically to Scripture, uniquely Christian doctrines, or even religion in general, the fact that such appeals are often made provides certain opportunities for Christian witness.

Although civil religion, very much like the natural religion it echoes, consciously intends, for the sake of civil harmony, to blunt the many distinctive, contradictory, and thus potentially contentious doctrines of any and all individual faiths,¹⁸⁸ it does for this very reason tend to promote civil harmony. To the extent that a peaceful and harmonious civil society allows for the preaching of the gospel, this may be deemed a good in itself. Further, though, because it implicitly assumes a natural knowledge of God, and therefore speaks in religious terms even for the sake of temporal concerns, civil religion might be recognized as serving the interests of the church because it “creates a space in the public square for religious discourse.”¹⁸⁹ The religious discourse of civil religion itself is, to be sure, not without major deficiencies, and even serious challenges to specifically Christian witness. Most obviously, the “anonymous God” of civil religion is decidedly not the revealed God who became incarnate, suffered, and died that he might redeem sinful human beings.¹⁹⁰ For this reason, Christians will want especially to be aware of the fact that even well-intentioned evangelistic references to God, if made without sufficient specificity, can be easily misunderstood. [See A “Regular” Prayer? on the following page.]

¹⁸⁷ Charles P. Arand, “Strategies for God-Talk in a Pluralistic Society,” in *Witness and Worship in Pluralistic America*, ed. John F. Johnson (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 2003), 14. Further, despite occasional objections, Americans will find mention of God, e.g., on their currency, in the Pledge of Allegiance, and in solemn courtroom oaths.

¹⁸⁸ See, e.g., David L. Adams, “The Challenges of American Civil Religion for the Church,” in *Witness and Worship in Pluralistic America*, ed. John F. Johnson (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 2003), 21–22, for a brief survey of the origins and intent of the concept of civil religion.

¹⁸⁹ David L. Adams, “Afterword: Quo Vadis?” in *The Anonymous God: The Church Confronts Civil Religion in American Society*, ed. David L. Adams and Ken Schurb (St. Louis: Concordia, 2004), 259.

¹⁹⁰ Further, civil religion’s insistence on reference only to a generic or “anonymous” god promotes the false impression that all religions in fact recognize and worship the same god; similarly, its inherent emphasis on civil righteousness tends to promote the false assumption that such righteousness is sufficient to establish a right relationship with God.

A “Regular” Prayer?

The pastor of a historic urban parish, Ray was an active and visible figure in its ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse neighborhood. The prominence of his congregation, as well as his own respected involvement with various neighborhood initiatives, often induced community leaders to request that Ray offer a word of prayer at civic events. It was thus no surprise when a local alderman approached him to inquire about a brief prayer between the Fourth of July parade and the speeches that would follow. What did surprise, however, after Ray had again accepted the offer, was the follow-up request. “Oh,” said the alderman, “and could you just make it a regular prayer this time?”

“I’m not sure I know what you mean, Henry. A regular prayer?”

“Yeah, you know, without all the fancy Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or the cross and death stuff. Just a regular prayer, you know, to God?”

“Oh, I see. But, Henry, since the true God is triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—I think it’s important that people understand that. And that they understand that the only reason we can stand before him in prayer, confident that he’ll hear us favorably, is because the Son of God died on a cross to forgive the sin which separates us from him. These things aren’t peripheral, Henry; they’re just part of ‘regular’ prayer for Christians like myself.”

“Sure, Reverend, I suppose you’d know better than I would. But you know not everyone around here is a Christian. And I just hate to think that a celebration meant to unite us all might make some people feel left out. You know these are good folks; maybe not all Christians, sure, but generally religious in their way. I just think a regular prayer—that just mentions

God, like in the Declaration of Independence—would go over a bit better, be a bit more friendly, you know?”

“Because, you mean, we really all believe in the same God? We just think differently about him and have different names for him?”

“Well, yes, now that you put it that way. Didn’t I say you’d know better than I would about this sort of thing? That’s exactly what I mean; glad you understand!”

“I do understand, Henry, but I’m afraid I don’t agree. We might all use the same word, ‘God,’ but we don’t all believe in the same God. As you mentioned, I believe that the only true God is triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But some of our friends here in the neighborhood don’t believe in that God; they might believe Jesus existed, for example, but they deny that he’s God. Actually, Henry, isn’t that why you wanted just a ‘regular’ prayer, because you realize that we don’t really all believe in the same God?”

“Well, now that you put it that way, I suppose you’re right again. I guess this is a little more complicated than I thought. I’m going to have to think on it some. In the meantime, though, what do I tell the folks putting together the program?”

“Good question, Henry; you’ve raised some questions for me, as well. Tell you what, though, maybe it’s best that we just skip the prayer this time. I’ll be there, of course, just like always. But maybe it’s best if I’m there just as a fellow citizen, and as pastor of St. John’s, rather than something like pastor of the neighborhood, much less the city or nation.”

“Fair enough, Reverend,” Henry concluded. “You’d know best,” he said one last time before ambling off.

Nonetheless,

Even though the god-talk of civil religion does not take a form that we can accept, it does provide an opportunity for us to engage others and teach the truth about the gospel of Jesus Christ, much like the altar to the unknown god on the Areopagus in Athens created an opportunity for the apostle Paul to witness to Christ. Thus, while we cannot accept American civil religion as a substitute for orthodox Christian teaching, and we always must be wary of the challenges that it presents, we ought

not to dismiss it as a wholly undesirable thing with no merit whatsoever.¹⁹¹

Because this is the case, “[i]t is for us to take advantage of the opportunity civil religion presents by proclaiming the full and authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ. When we fail to do so, that failure is ours; it is not the failure of civil religion.”¹⁹²

One opportunity presented by civil religion, of which the Christian might “take advantage,” derives from a central focus of civil religion itself. Concerned as it is with the maintenance of social harmony, civil religion—like the natural religion out of which it grew—is fundamentally a religion of law. As such, its primary focus is of course different from, and even antithetical to, Christianity’s central focus on the gospel. Nevertheless, as even the ambiguous “God-talk” of civil religion makes evident, it presupposes, at least implicitly, and in common with Christianity, that the law is ultimately grounded in and derived from a divine being. The tacit admission of this fact by those who are accepting of the broad contours of civil religion thus opens the way for Christians to highlight and to press the potentially overlooked implications of such an admission. One point to be highlighted, for example, is that, since it is agreed that even the positive laws enacted by human legislators rest ultimately on fundamental moral principles that are divine in origin (even if known naturally, by reason, rather than by means of the special revelation of a particular religion), then immoral or unlawful behavior is an offense not only to the temporal authorities, but to and against God himself.

Thus arises the pointed question of whether one has behaved, or even can behave, in perfect accord even with those moral laws known and accepted by means of natural reason. The answer, concisely formulated by C.S. Lewis (1898–1963), is that “[t]hey know the Law of Nature; they break it. These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in.”¹⁹³ By way of analogy, and on the basis of this foundation, it might then be further pointed out that, if some such offenses are punishable even by civil authority, then it is certainly a fair assumption that those who disobey the law established by divine authority are likewise deserving of punishment by the author and executor of that law. To the extent that this (admittedly truncated and greatly simplified) train of logic is recognized as valid, and the individual’s standing before God as a law-breaker—a law-breaker with “no excuse” (Rom. 2:1)—is therefore understood, he or she might be more readily receptive of the proclamation of the uniquely Christian good news that, on account of Christ’s suffering the punishment of the law in man’s stead, God himself has canceled “the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands” (Col. 2:14).

¹⁹¹ Adams, “The Challenges of American Civil Religion for the Church,” 27.

¹⁹² Adams, “Afterword: Quo Vadis?” 260.

¹⁹³ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 8.

Even in dialogue with those professing themselves to be atheists or agnostics, and so not accepting even of the vague “God-talk” characteristic of civil religion, one might establish some common ground from which to proclaim the gospel by initially emphasizing shared left-hand concerns pertaining to the law. This, for example, was precisely the goal of C.S. Lewis in the popular work quoted above. Beginning with the fact that all people innately recognize, embrace, and utilize the simple categories of “right” and “wrong,” he was able to point out that all people possess at least the concept of moral laws. Further, despite often noted (but relatively few, and sometimes dubious) exceptions, there is something approaching universal consensus—across chronological, geographical, and cultural divides—on what these laws are and what they require, at least in their fundamental principles.¹⁹⁴ This then allows him to raise the question of what accounts for such a consensus and, therefore, what accounts for this law itself. His own answer is that the universal nature of such law suggests its objectivity, that is, its transcending of all particular times, places, and cultures. By way of analogy with even humanly contrived and promulgated laws, which originate most immediately from human minds, Lewis then concludes that the most satisfactory explanation of the origin of these fundamental moral principles recognized by all human beings is their being promulgated by a transcendent mind. [See *Without Excuse?* on the facing page]

As previously noted, Lewis himself recognizes—and cautions—that a transcendent mind is “not yet within a hundred miles of the God of Christian theology.”¹⁹⁵ Further, one need not agree with each of Lewis’ points (or, again, their greatly oversimplified presentation here) in order simply to recognize that his attempt to establish an awareness of the natural law and, on that basis, to establish some natural knowledge of a divine being to whom one is morally indebted, is one potentially practical application of these concepts in such a way that might prepare one to welcome the proclamation of the gospel. Finally, though these are only two examples out of any number possible, the above opportunities suggested by contemporary civil religious discourse and common moral understandings are perhaps especially noteworthy in this regard; that is, they proceed directly from certain common concerns regarding the law, a clear knowledge of which is prerequisite to recognizing the gospel as the “good news” it is.

However, an emphasis on the natural knowledge of God and the law is not, of course, the only manner in which one might establish and proceed from some point of contact to specifically Christian witness. Nor is proceeding from a natural knowledge of the law and its implications the only manner in which one might establish even a rudimentary knowledge of God’s existence.

¹⁹⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly, given some of the conclusions noted above, these fundamental moral principles largely reflect the content of the Decalogue. On this point, see also Lewis’ treatment of the subject in his *Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1947).

¹⁹⁵ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 25.

Without Excuse?

Though retired neighbors Thomas and Henry do not see eye to eye on questions of religion—and, in fact, regularly argue about it—both share an interest in history, and so often spend evenings together watching documentaries on a cable history channel. One night, while viewing a program on the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals following the Second World War, Thomas was struck by the legal conundrum faced by the judges and prosecutors at Nuremberg. While the evidence of atrocities was overwhelming, and clearly implicated those standing trial, the defense quite rightly argued that the crimes of which the defendants were accused were not in fact “crimes” at all; that is, they had not been illegal under the judicial codes of the Third Reich. Their actions may indeed have transgressed the laws of the United States, or France, or Great Britain; but, being German citizens, it was argued, the defendants could neither be tried by the laws of another nation, nor by *ex post facto* laws. Thomas was sympathetic to the clear logic of this argument—and yet simultaneously disturbed by the implication that such inhumane acts as committed by the Nazis might be deemed legitimate simply because they were not explicitly proscribed in a written legal code. He was therefore intrigued by

what the documentary described as the prosecutors’ appeal to a “natural law,” a law which, even if not enshrined in the written code of a particular nation, is sufficiently evident to and binding upon all rational human beings. By the light of this law, the prosecutors argued, those standing trial could have—and *should* have—clearly recognized the wrong of their actions, that their actions were, as the indictment described them, “crimes against humanity.” Thus, the lack of specific prohibitions in the positive law of Germany did not excuse their behavior. As the documentary concluded, Thomas found himself also sympathetic to the logic of this argument. Again, though, he was faintly disturbed by its possible implications. If right and wrong, justice and injustice, were not simply defined by the “social contract” of a particular people in a particular place at a particular time, but were in some respect objective and universal categories, then what possibly accounted for the existence of such an objective and universal law? What—or who—could be considered its author? While the credits rolled, he began to suspect that Henry might well win their next religious argument, and that he might have to begin rethinking his doubt of God’s existence.

As noted in previous sections, for example, Luther, the Lutheran dogmatists, and the Scriptures themselves hold that some acquired knowledge of God is made possible by God’s gift of reason being applied to the evidence of the natural world in which he faintly yet sufficiently reveals himself. Thus, especially when reflecting upon the first chapter of Romans, Luther frequently remarks that, even among unbelievers, “their reason tells them that the heavenly bodies cannot run their definite course without a ruler.”¹⁹⁶ Likewise, the dogmatists regularly confess that God might be known, even by the unregenerate, “through a process of reasoning and the accurate contemplation of created things.”¹⁹⁷ Moreover, the dogmatists especially move beyond simply noting this fact and regularly provide examples of the kinds of evidence, and rational inferences from it, that might be deemed sufficient to persuade the open-minded skeptic of God’s existence.

¹⁹⁶ Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John*, AE 22:149.

¹⁹⁷ Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica*, quoted in Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 107. The same is confessed, it is worth noting, also by the early dogmatists of the LCMS. So, e.g., Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:310, affirms that “a natural, rational observation of the creation reveals God as its Creator.” C.F.W. Walther similarly remarks that “a person, even without Holy Scripture, can be convinced that there is a God by contemplating the world.” C.F.W. Walther, *God Grant It: Daily Devotions from C.F.W. Walther*, trans. Gerhard P. Grabenhofer, ed. August Crull (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 876.

This is evident, for example, already in the works of Luther’s contemporary and colleague Philip Melancthon, who, in his commentary on the epistle to the Romans will “briefly recite nine arguments from nature which testify that God is the founder and preserver of things.”¹⁹⁸ Commenting on “the order of things in all nature,” for instance, he suggests that “we see how sure are the laws that govern the movements of the heavenly bodies,” and asks: “Do they not testify clearly that nature did not come into existence by chance, but that they had their origin in some eternal mind?”¹⁹⁹ Similarly, appealing to the principle of causation, which “is treated at length in physics and is sufficiently established,” Melancthon can argue that “[c]auses are ordered in nature, so that it is necessary to go back to one first cause which is not set in motion from elsewhere, but moves the others. If it is the first, it is necessary that it have the power to move itself.”²⁰⁰ This “prime mover” or “unmoved mover,” he recognizes, even the pagan philosophers had associated with God.

The Lutheran dogmatic tradition by no means universally followed Melancthon’s lead, it is true. Thus, the “second Martin,” Martin Chemnitz, even while confessing that man is capable of acquiring a natural knowledge of God’s existence, offers no arguments in his own dogmatics to demonstrate the existence of God. But among those orthodox Lutherans theologians who do,²⁰¹ the influential Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) offers the “most developed presentation of such apologetics to be found in Lutheran theology” at the time.²⁰² Significantly, Gerhard’s “proofs” largely restate the “five ways” already developed by the medieval scholastic Thomas Aquinas.²⁰³ Thus, like Melancthon, Gerhard reiterates Aquinas’ argument for the logical necessity of a “prime mover.” Similarly, because all effects result from a prior cause, all effects observable in nature must eventually trace back to a first cause, which, Gerhard says, “we all call God.”²⁰⁴ Again echoing Aquinas, Gerhard also observes in nature a teleology, or purposefulness, seen as evidence of nature’s “intelligent design,” and therefore implying the existence of a supernatural designer.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁸ Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans*, 77.

¹⁹⁹ Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans*, 78.

²⁰⁰ Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans*, 79.

²⁰¹ It is worth noting that these include even Johann Baier (1647–1695), whose *Compendium Theologiae Positivae* (1685) was edited for republication in 1879 by LCMS father C.F.W. Walther.

²⁰² Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2:37. Preus does note on the same page, however, that Gerhard’s “approach is rather modest when compared with the elaborate arguments of the philosophers of the day.”

²⁰³ See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Part 1, Question 2, Article 3.

²⁰⁴ Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, vol. 3 (Tübingen: J.G. Cotta, 1764), Locus 2, Chapter 4, Section 61.

²⁰⁵ Gerhard also restates Aquinas’ argument from the “principle of sufficient reason” and the distinction between contingent and necessary existence. Departing from Aquinas, though, and reminiscent of Luther’s above noted comment on the mariners of Jonah, his fifth argument appeals to what he views as man’s natural propensity to call upon divine aid when in danger. Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, vol. 3, Locus 2, Chapter 4, Section 61.

The significance of Gerhard’s reliance upon Aquinas is at least two-fold. First, and positively, for the many differences between the theologies of Lutheranism and medieval scholasticism, Gerhard rightly recognizes that on matters of natural evidence rationally examined one certainly need not be a Lutheran—or even a Christian²⁰⁶—to develop persuasive arguments and to reach sound conclusions. Secondly, though, with less positive practical implications, arguments first given coherent shape in the thirteenth century will, in that shape, sometimes be much less persuasive when presented in the aftermath of the “scientific revolution.”²⁰⁷ This is not to suggest that the laws or theories of modern science actually disprove such arguments;²⁰⁸ it is only to suggest that arguments of the sort developed by Aquinas and adopted by Gerhard will in some cases benefit from expansion, revision, or nuance, especially when presented to a scientifically literate audience.

As previously noted, however, in light of the virtually unquestioned authority attributed to science by many today, scientific data might be especially persuasive in attempts to establish a natural knowledge of God. Despite frequently quoted assertions that “[o]ne of the great achievements of science has been, if not to make it impossible for an intelligent person to be religious, then at least to make it possible for them not to be religious,”²⁰⁹ or that certain modern scientific theories make it “possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist,”²¹⁰ it is certainly not the case that any particular conclusions of scientific research rule out the possibility of God’s existence.²¹¹ [See *Hardwired to Believe?* on the following page]

²⁰⁶ Many of Aquinas’ own arguments, for example, rest upon those of the pagan philosopher Aristotle.

²⁰⁷ To note only one example: the understanding of motion upon which Aquinas’ “first way” is predicated differs radically from that set forth in, e.g., the laws of motion enumerated by Isaac Newton (1642–1747).

²⁰⁸ Indeed, as will be noted below, some data and conclusions of modern science greatly strengthen such arguments.

²⁰⁹ Steven Weinberg, “A Designer Universe?” *The New York Review of Books* (21 October 1999), 48.

²¹⁰ Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, 6.

²¹¹ This is candidly admitted by one scientific atheist, who writes that “[i]t is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world”; instead, he explains, the denial of God as an explanation results “because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism.” Further, he goes on to state, “that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.” Richard Lewontin, “Billions and Billions of Demons,” *The New York Review of Books* (9 January 1997), 31.

Hardwired to Believe?

Waiting in the DMV, George found himself engrossed in an article about research from a long outdated news magazine on the formation of religious belief in children. What especially piqued his interest was the suggestion that belief in God appeared to be natural in children. The brain's "hardwiring" seemed to predispose them to it. After finishing the article he pointed it out to Maria: "This is worth reading."

It took Maria a moment to place the article; but she then excitedly commented, "Oh, I've seen that—dentist, doctor's office, somewhere. Isn't it fascinating?"

George was surprised. "It is," he said, "but I expected you to find it more frustrating than fascinating."

"Really?" Maria asked. "What do you mean?"

"Well," George proceeded tentatively, having anticipated a few more moments to collect his thoughts: "It seems pretty much to discredit belief in God, don't you think?"

"No, I didn't get that at all. How so?"

"Because it seems to say that belief in God is a children's belief. The author is too polite to come right out and say 'childish,' but it seems comparable to belief in the tooth fairy—or any belief you grow out of."

"Ah, I see. But I don't think the author is simply being polite. I suspect she knows the difference between childhood beliefs and 'childish' ones. Aren't most of the things we believe as adults things that we began to believe as children? Why single out belief in God as uniquely childish? Especially since many people actually come to acknowledge God's existence—unlike the tooth fairy's—only as adults."

"Okay, when you put it that way, perhaps 'childish' is too strong. But, still, it's unformed belief. Doesn't the research say that the human brain has evolved in such a way that, even apart from evidence, it almost automatically produces the belief that there's a God? And without evidence, it's an unwarranted belief."

"Yes, I suppose it is belief without evidence—at that point. But that makes your tooth fairy analogy even less accurate, since children believe in a tooth fairy because of a kind of evidence: mom mentions the tooth fairy, the tooth disappears, and a quarter appears in its place."

George broke in, "Good point! So belief in God is even less warranted than belief in the tooth fairy!"

Mary laughed. "No, that wasn't my point. But let's run with it. Kids come to believe in the tooth fairy because of evidence. Why do they stop believing?"

"For me—because I actually woke up and caught my dad swapping the tooth for a quarter."

"So you found evidence that contradicted your belief. But until then, you still had reason to believe."

"Sure, but again, kids believe in God without evidence, so without any good reason. They only do so because their brains, for some reason, evolved to make them think that way."

"I'm not so sure. From what I recall, the evidence only says that this is how infant brains work. To say it's because of evolution is the boilerplate hypothesis for explaining everything these days. But even if that were the case—no, especially if it were the case—our brains, as you put it, 'make us believe' lots of things that we don't simply dismiss as untrue. Instead, we generally accept them unless and until we have good reason to reject them. I'd say belief in God is in this category. If we're 'programmed' to have an innate belief in God, then that belief is warranted until we have good cause to doubt it. And, since we debated evolution before, I know you've got some real questions about how adequately it actually accounts for everything."

"Yes, but..."

"So, just for the sake of argument, what if humans and their brains didn't just somehow evolve unguided, but were actually created by God? Wouldn't he want us to believe in him, and why not 'hardwire' that basic belief into us? Or, to ask the question backward, isn't the apparent 'hardwiring' perhaps some sort of evidence that there is a God who created us and wants us to acknowledge that?"

Maria's number was called out before she could press the point further; but she'd already said enough to make George regret having drawn attention to the article. He was not only stuck in the DMV, but now also forced to think once again about why he remained so resistant to the idea of God's existence.

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partially based in the data and methods of modern science.²¹⁶ Before leaving the realm of science, however, it is perhaps worth noting one other respect in which the modern reverence for science might potentially aid Christian witness. To the extent that the atheist, for example, remains unconvinced by arguments such as the preceding, and remains committed to the view that no supernatural entity exists, he or she might be confronted with the implications which follow from such a "naturalism" (also sometimes called "materialism" or, increasingly, "physicalism"). It might be observed, for example, that if nothing exists other than nature—matter and energy—then all that exists remains strictly subject to the laws of nature. This, in the naturalist view, must also include human beings themselves. To the extent, then, that humans, being nothing more than the sum total of their physical and biochemical composition, are therefore governed only by the natural laws of physics, chemistry, and biology, it becomes impossible to speak in any meaningful or coherent sense about human free will. It might also be pointed out that this is an implication readily admitted by scientific naturalists.²¹⁷ The potential benefit of highlighting this point is evident in the recognition that modern westerners, however committed to the authority of science, are by no means less committed to, and are even obsessed with, the belief in "choice." Therefore, just as St. Paul made the Athenians aware that they could not at the same time embrace the belief that men have their origins in gods, and that idols originating with men are gods, so too might the atheistic materialist be confronted with the contradictory nature of his or her own beliefs.

The above examples of ways in which one might proceed from certain "points of contact" with unbelieving contemporaries in attempts to establish a basic belief in God's existence are, again, not the only examples possible.²¹⁸ Moreover, proceeding on the basis of natural evidence and logical reasoning, and capitalizing on the esteem in which empirical data and the scientific method are often held, are not the only means by which skeptics might be induced to contemplate that which, at some level, they already "know." Thus, some might be especially engaged by a point of contact located in literature

²¹⁶ For an accessible introduction to such arguments, see, e.g., Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

²¹⁷ E.g., John Searle, *Minds, Brains, and Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 98, acknowledges that "our conception of reality simply does not allow for radical freedom."

²¹⁸ Though beyond the parameters of the present study, what is often called "evidential apologetics" deserves special mention as yet another means by which one might appeal to evidence and reason in dialogue with the skeptic. Rather than the classical "two-step" approach—first establishing that a God exists, and then moving on to attempt establishing that the *true* God is that of Christianity—the evidential approach appeals immediately to the historical evidence for Jesus, his claim to be God, and his vindication of this claim by resurrection from death. This "one-step" approach has, among other benefits, the benefit of keeping the conversation in close proximity to Christ and the gospel. On this, see, e.g., Gary Habermas, "Evidential Apologetics," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 91–121.

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Indeed, quite the opposite. Thus, for example, one renowned cosmologist and adult convert to Christianity explains that "[i]t was my science that drove me to the conclusion that the world is much more complicated than can be explained by science," and that "[i]t is only through the supernatural that I can understand the mystery of existence."²¹⁹ Another candidly remarks that a "commonsense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature."²²⁰

One example of the manner in which empirical data and logical reasoning might be persuasively presented in support of God's existence is that typically referred to as the Kalam Cosmological Argument.²²¹ Like the cosmological arguments of Aquinas and Gerhard, this has its origins in the Middle Ages; but it has been supplemented with more recent evidence by its modern proponents. Concisely stated in syllogistic form, this argument holds that:

Premise 1: Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its existence;

Premise 2: The universe began to exist;

Conclusion: Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.

The first premise simply states the axiomatic principles of "sufficient reason" and "causality," that is, that all effects have causes and that something cannot be caused by nothing. The second premise simply states the modern consensus, based upon scientific data, that the universe is not eternal, but had a beginning in the finite past.²²² If both premises are correct, then it follows that the existence of the universe was caused. As whatever might be posited as having caused it to come into existence cannot be a part of the universe itself, it must be recognized as having its own existence outside the universe. That is to say, it exists outside of space and time, outside of "nature," and is therefore by definition *super-natural*.

Again, this is merely one example from an increasingly broad and deep body of literature devoted to arguments for the existence of God at least

²¹⁹ The cosmologist is Allan Sandage, quoted in Sharon Begley, "Science Finds God," *Newsweek* (20 July 1998), 46.

²²⁰ Fred Hoyle, "The Universe: Past and Present Reflections," *Annual Review of Astronomy and Astrophysics* 20 (1982), 16.

²²¹ So named for the Arabic term *kalam*, meaning "discourse" or "discussion," and reflecting the origins of the argument in medieval Islamic philosophy.

²²² This is one of the conclusions of modern science that substantially strengthens the older cosmological arguments of, e.g., Aquinas. Before the twentieth century there was little reason to believe, on the basis of natural evidence alone, that the universe came into existence, that its existence was thus contingent rather than necessary, and that it was therefore an effect requiring a cause. Advances in astronomy during the twentieth century, however, led to the discovery that the universe is not static, but is expanding. This and related discoveries thus suggested (by projecting backwards) the now generally accepted conclusion that the universe of space and time had a beginning in the finite past.

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and the arts rather than in the sciences.²¹⁹ The previously mentioned professor of literature and adult convert C.S. Lewis provides one example of such an individual. He recounts the deep impression made upon him by the off-hand remark of a colleague (who, ironically, Lewis notes was "the hardest boiled of all the atheists I ever knew") commenting upon James Frazer's famous work on mythology, *The Golden Bough*: "All that stuff of Frazer's about the Dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it had really happened once."²²⁰ Similarly, in certain contexts the Christian evangelist might wonder about the possible reason for certain common themes evident, for example, in the myths and fairy tales of the world's many cultures. One might wonder what explains the nearly ubiquitous accounts of a divine creation, a "fall," and a longing for paradise, of a great flood, of malevolent "tricksters" and "redeemer" heroes.²²¹ Further, one might wonder not only what accounts for these similar themes being found across the world's literature, but also why such themes continue to resonate with readers, hearers, and viewers.²²² The question might be raised, contemplated, and discussed whether such resonance testifies to certain innate human longings and desires, which themselves might reflect some innate but obscured or suppressed knowledge of God and his law. This, for example, is what Lewis himself suggests when writing, "[i]f I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world,"²²³ and, more fully:

A man's physical hunger does not prove that a man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes from a race which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist. In the same way, though I do not believe (I wish I did) that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I

²¹⁹ In this context some have thus distinguished between arguments for the "tough-minded" and the "tender-minded" skeptic. See, e.g., Craig Parlon, *The Defense Never Rests: A Lawyer's Quest for the Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2003), 97–103.

²²⁰ C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1955), 223–24. Though Lewis clarifies a few pages later that the conversion partially prompted by this conversation "was only to Theism, pure and simple, not to Christianity" (230), he later comments upon his eventual coming to the Christian faith that, "[t]he real clue had been put into my hand by that hard-boiled Atheist when he said, 'Rum thing, all that about the Dying God. Seems to have really happened once'" (235).

²²¹ On such recurring themes, see, e.g., J.F. Bierlein, *Parallel Myths* (New York: Ballantine, 1994), and Lorena Stookey, *Thematic Guide to World Mythology* (Westport: Greenwood, 2004).

²²² Lewis himself offers an answer—impossible to prove, but none the less suggestive—when he proposes that, "Myth in general is not merely misunderstood history (as Euhemerus thought) nor diabolical illusion (as some of the Fathers thought) nor priestly lying (as the philosophers of the Enlightenment thought) but, at its best, a real though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling on human imagination." C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (London: Fontana, 1960), 138 n.

²²³ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 136–37.

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think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men will.²²⁴

More famously, and much more concisely, this is the theme sounded in the prayer with which begins the *Confessions* of St. Augustine (354–430): “you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”²²⁵

²²⁴ C.S. Lewis, “The Weight of Glory,” in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 32–33.

²²⁵ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3.

V. Conclusion

Augustine is not incorrect. Natural man—man outside of redemption in Christ—is indeed, and must be, restless. This is the case precisely because, created by God for the purpose of living in communion with him, men have been endowed with some natural knowledge of God’s existence so that they might by their very nature be prompted to “seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him” (Acts 17:27). Man will therefore remain restless so long as he remains separated from God. Further, as this natural knowledge of God encompasses also, and especially, a natural knowledge of the law, sinful man cannot but be restless and uneasy in his awareness that even this minimal knowledge leaves him with “no excuse” before God (Rom. 2:1). Finally, unable and unwilling to face the stark implications of even this natural knowledge, sinful man actively seeks to suppress it; his inability to do so completely, however, only further contributes to his restless unease.²²⁶

Even in the relatively religious United States, indicators suggest that both the number and the percentage of the “restless” continue to grow annually. Recent data reveals, for example, that in addition to those who adhere to many and various non-Christian religions, nearly 20% of Americans describe themselves as unaffiliated with any religion. This includes more than thirteen million individuals who describe themselves specifically as atheists or agnostics.²²⁷ Despite such statistics, however, the testimony of Scripture, confessed also by the Lutheran confessors and dogmaticians, is that even those who declare themselves atheists or agnostics in fact retain some knowledge of God written on their hearts. To be sure, this is “not saving knowledge”; indeed, its very possession may lead many to be “confused about the one true God” and “to believe falsely that all religions lead to salvation.” Nonetheless, as the above pages have attempted to demonstrate, it also remains true that some “understanding of the natural knowledge of God can assist the members of the congregations of the LCMS in their witness.”²²⁸

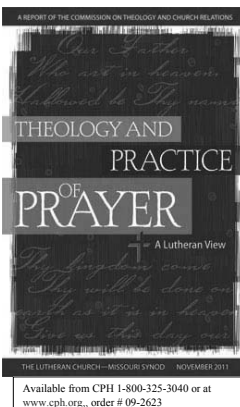
It is thus the Christian’s great privilege (and, indeed, the Lord’s great mandate [Matt. 28:19]) to proclaim unto the world the good news that the God in whom eternal rest is to be found need no longer be sought for—or hidden from—but that this God has himself sought out, found, and redeemed his fallen creatures. It is the Christian’s great privilege to announce that the law, which even the unregenerate know pronounces death for those who break it (Rom. 1:32), has been fulfilled by this God himself, who in human flesh not only satisfied its requirements in the stead of sinful man, but also in the

²²⁶ On this point, see, e.g., R.C. Sproul, *If There’s a God, Why Are There Atheists?* (Orlando: Liongier, 1997), 72–78.

²²⁷ Pew Research Center, “*Nones*” *On the Rise*, 9. To put this in some perspective, the number of atheists and agnostics in the U.S. is roughly six times the number of LCMS Lutherans, and approximately twice as many as the total number of American Lutherans.

²²⁸ Resolution 3-04A, *2007 Convention Proceedings*, 121.

sinner’s stead suffered the mortal penalty of its having been broken. It is the Christian’s great privilege, therefore, to give name to the “unknown god” of Athens, the “anonymous god” of civil religion, and the denied god of modern skepticism and atheism—to proclaim “the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9–11).



Theology and Practice of Prayer A Lutheran View

Study and Discussion Guide (Commission on Theology and Church Relations)¹

Outline

- 1: Universal practice to Christian teaching
- 2: Prayer and the Gospel
- 3: The paradox of prayer
- 4: "This is how you should pray..."
- 5: Jesus' prayer priorities—I
- 6: Jesus' prayer priorities—II

¹ These materials may be used alone or as a companion to the CTCR report, *Theology and Practice of Prayer: A Lutheran View* (2011; abbreviated as TPP). The headings for the six sections of this study provide the page numbers from TPP which may be read in tandem with the study. The materials are presented in six parts, with each part divided into two sections to allow for the study to take place in 6 or 12 sessions, as desired. Moreover, the consecutive arrangement allows individuals or groups to break each section into additional parts if desired.

1

1. From Universal Practice to Christian Teaching

(TPP, pages 5-14)

A.

Opening: *Pray Psalm 61:1-5*

What is prayer?

Dictionaries remind us that the English word "prayer" indicates a request from a lesser person to one greater—imploping or begging. Although less common today, it is a word that was frequently used in every-day relationships in court pleadings or requests from servants or beggars. Note the tone of the humble request in **Psalm 61:1-5**. What are some of the words used to describe prayer in this psalm?

Prayer is often a cry—a faint call—which is an important fact. We pray because of weakness and need.

The universality of prayer

Prayer is found in every culture and among every class of humans, so it is a universal practice. But it varies widely in terms of how people pray and the one to whom they pray. For example, some religious prayer practices include petitions to different gods for different goals, use of carved wooden blocks to seek guidance for a specific course of action, utter silence with the goal of entering into a trance-like state, and other techniques. Consider what you know about the prayer practices of non-Christian religions and why that is important. Why is prayer such a universal human practice?

All the world prays, because... of human powerlessness and need

We pray because "Man is a beggar before God," said St. Augustine. Luther scrawled, "We are beggars, it is true," on a piece of paper found in his pocket when he died. No one wants to beg, but when the need is most extreme, what other recourse do we have? Begging happens because of need. But for those who beg on streets and by-ways around the world, it is coupled with uncertainty ("Will anyone help?") and also a sort of alienation and even resentment ("They don't understand or care, if they did, they would help.")

Read the familiar story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal (see **1 Kgs 18:23-24, 27-29, 36-38**). Everyone is praying, but what is the difference in the prayers to Baal and Elijah's prayer? What do the differences involve and reveal?

All the world prays, because... of something innate to humanity

Read **Acts 17:22-28**. Paul points out the inherent religiosity of people in verse 22. People have a natural inclination to "seek God" and "feel their way" to him (v. 27). How effective is feeling our way to God?

Read **Romans 1:21-23**. How does the commonality of prayer correspond with the biblical teaching of some level of natural knowledge of God? Is the instinctive or natural human knowledge of God adequate? How does Romans 1 help explain the different approaches to prayer found in other religions? These passages show that something of the invisible God is seen in creation; but the image is easily suppressed and detours into falsehood.

There is "a 'drivenness' in our creaturehood that gives humanity no surcease from praying. As praying Christians, seeking to fulfill our mission and destiny as God's church in the world, we need to understand this phenomenon." (Kenneth E. Korby, quoted in TPP, 10.)

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B.

(*Pray Psalm 8 if this is a separate session*)

Why the world prays? (Luther's explanation)

Read and summarize the message of **Romans 2:14-16**. That God's Law is on our hearts might seem evident only in that people tend to have a sense of right and wrong about such things as murder or adultery. But part of the Law is also the recognition of a god (higher power, force, principles, etc.) to which we are indebted and from whom we seek help.

The *Large Catechism* speaks of this "natural law." Martin Luther also explains that humanity has arranged "forms of divine service" (prayer, etc.) in a desire to find God and be helped and blessed by him, but he also warns that seeking God by reason alone only makes us fools (*Luther's Works*, 40:96). It makes sense, then, that prayer is a universal experience, yet, one colored by sin. Indeed, even an atheist chaplain (talk about a contradiction in terms!), Greg Epstein, has suggested a form of prayer for atheists (*Good Without God*, 179ff.). So, although it is universal, prayer certainly is not understood in a universal fashion.

Where do we begin in order to gain a solid foundation for prayer?

As Christians, we begin with Scripture and with Jesus' teaching, especially the Lord's Prayer. As *Lutheran* Christians our understanding of prayer is connected to the central teaching of justification by faith. We also realize that there is much to learn from the writings of past generations that are faithful to Scripture—from church fathers, Creeds and confessions.

Identify some Biblical synonyms for prayer in these passages

- **Psalm 41:4; Acts 10:14**
- **Psalm 61:1; Acts 7:60**
- **Psalm 5:2; Luke 11:2**
- **Psalm 2:8; Mark 11:24**
- **Jer. 27:18; 1 Tim 2:1**
- **Psalm 86:9; Acts 26:7**

Biblical synonyms for prayer—such as "say," "ask," "cry," "beg," "intercede," "entreat," and "worship"—all remind us that prayer in Scripture means some form of talking with God.

Prayer portraits

Each of the following pictures of prayer tells us something. Note the settings and the purposes for prayer in these instances:

- **Numbers 12:13**
- **Psalm 69:30**
- **Psalm 35:13-14**
- **Daniel 6:10**
- **Acts 3:1**
- **Matthew 26:41**
- **Ephesians 6:18-20**
- **1 Timothy 2:8**

God's people pray in times of need and rescue, in sickness and loss, alone and with others, at set times and places and on all kinds of occasions and in any place.

"The Scriptures identify prayer as an act that could be set in particular moments and places and routinized in definite ways. But it was not confined to such settings. Formality and fixity interchange with openness and freedom in the time and place of prayer." (Patrick Miller, quoted in TPP, 14.)

3

4

2. Prayer and the Gospel

(TPP, pages 14-22)

A.

Opening: *Pray Psalm 130*

The variety of biblical terms for prayer points to a simple definition of prayer as talking with God. In the Bible, prayer is focused less on the talking than on the *One to whom we pray*.

To whom do we pray? We know God in Christ

Read **John 17:3** and consider Harold Senkbeil's comment: "If we want to learn to pray we must become like children. For that's who we really are, children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Thus the first step in prayer is to step into the presence of God our loving Father as His beloved children. And there's only one way to do that: in the name of Jesus."

God of the Gospel

Read **Psalm 130:1-8**. David's prayer is spoken in great distress—"out of the depths I cry"—but it is also a prayer of great confidence. What gives David confidence? As he "waits" for the Lord, what is it that he awaits? Why is this mournful prayer so full of hope?

Read **Psalm 32:1-7**. Consider this prayer of David—a prayer spoken with full knowledge of his "transgression," "sin," and "iniquity." It acknowledges that God's judgment is heavy and that guilt can disable us completely. But notice also how David describes a "godly" person (verse 6).

The book of Hebrews is also a great source of teaching about prayer because it reminds us of the One who intercedes for us. Look at **Hebrews 4:14-16**. Who is our "great high priest"? What does his intercessory work mean for us and our prayers? **Hebrews 10:19-25** reminds us that we can "draw near" to God "by the blood of Jesus" our Priest, who in Baptism ("sprinkled," "washed") gives the "assurance of faith" and the "confession of our hope."

More than we ask or think

Read and discuss **Ephesians 3:14-21**. In these verses, the Holy Spirit reveals the gift of prayer at work in St. Paul. To whom does Paul pray? From whom does strength come? What does Paul ask for his readers? What does he say that enables being "filled with all the fullness of God" according to Paul? Note that Paul both encourages prayer and also reminds us that God is not limited by our requests.

The Gospel changes everything

Previously, we looked at the uncertainty of the human search for God, and the way that affects prayer. Luther identifies the problem: "It is impossible for a conscience to expect anything from God unless it first gains the conviction that God is gracious for Christ's sake."

But Christians pray as those who are "completely certain that we are heard on account of Christ and that by his merits we have a gracious Father." (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XI, 20)

5

B.

(*Pray Psalm 66 if this is a separate session*)

Atheists and others just don't get prayer

Many people mock prayer, seeing it as cute in little children and immature adults, but ultimately futile. It doesn't help when Christians portray prayer unbiblically or inadequately.

What prayer is not

Notice what Jesus says in **Matthew 6:5-7**. Prayer is not some form of magical incantation based on fine or fancy words. God isn't impressed even though some folks may stand in awe.

- **Daniel 9:18-19** is a reminder that prayer is not a conversation between equals. We "present our pleas" to God, recognizing we have nothing but sin to offer him in exchange. All prayer is a plea—prayer always depends on God's mercy alone.
- **1 Timothy 4:4-5**, especially verse 5, puts prayer together with the Word of God and reminds us that prayer is not a substitute for the Word of God, but is to be coupled with his Word.
- Above all else, prayer is not a neutral spiritual tool for any use we choose. **Isaiah 44:14-17** points out the foolishness of prayer to a false God. The story of the prayers of the tax collector and Pharisee in **Luke 18:10-14** is a reminder that proud prayers are not God-pleasing. These are "cautions" of a sort that may help prevent false views of prayer.

Discuss the problem of false views of prayer, and consider other inadequate views about prayer.

Other misunderstandings

- **Psalm 50:15** shows that while some may think God is unapproachable, the true God invites and urges us to pray.
- Read **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**. Some also think that there is no need for prayer since God is all-knowing—but the all-knowing God says something different.
- Still others think of prayer as a "blank check" (for the right person) and may use Jesus' words to support their claim: "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do" (**John 14:13**). But how does **John 15:7** fit with such a perspective? There Jesus applies his promise to those who "remain in me and my words remain in you."

Christian prayer is a response to the Gospel

"After the preaching of the Gospel whereby God speaks to us, this is the greatest and foremost work, that by prayer we in turn speak to God." —Martin Luther

6

3. The Paradox of Prayer

(TPP, pages 23-35)

A.

Opening: *Pray Psalm 103*

Remember that we have seen how the Gospel clarifies things. Luther: "It is impossible for a conscience to expect anything from God unless it first gains the conviction that God is gracious for Christ's sake." This means that Christians pray as those who are "completely certain that we are heard on account of Christ and that by his merits we have a gracious Father" (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XI, 20).

True worship—and prayer—in spirit and in truth

Read **John 4:1-26**, especially 19-24. What Jesus says about true worship as done in spirit and truth goes for prayer as well, for prayer is an aspect of worship. Notice verse 23—"the Father is seeking such people to worship." The Father seeks our prayers! In case we have any doubt about that, consider and discuss some of the exhortations to pray that are found in God's Word:

- **Luke 18:1**
- **Luke 21:34-36**
- **Romans 12:12**
- **Colossians 4:2**
- **1 Timothy 2:1-3**
- **James 1:5-8**

Such verses remind us that Scripture has to urge us to pray. Luther points this out also, urging pastors "to exhort and encourage the people to pray" (*Large Catechism*).

So why should we pray?

Because God tells us to pray—it's a duty. We have not only all the preceding verses, but the Ten Commandments as well: "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God" (**Ex 20:7**). We dare not forget that when God prohibits one thing he commands its opposite. As God forbids false gods, he does so to have us know him, the true God (**Ex 20:3**). So also, when he forbids the misuse of his name, he is also commanding its right use.

Yet, we fail to keep the commandments. Commandments cannot save us, for they constantly indict us instead. That is why it is so important to recall the earlier emphasis of this study, that *Christians* pray because we know God in Jesus Christ. We know the Gospel—our sins (including failures to pray as we ought) have been forgiven for Jesus' sake.

Only after Luther discusses the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed in the catechisms, does he explain the Lord's Prayer, saying: "We have heard what we are to do and to believe.... Now follows the third part, how we are to pray." (Quoted in TPP, 24.)

7

B.

(*Pray Psalm 50:7-15 if this is a separate session*)

Because of the forgiveness of sins, God's command to pray is rightly understood. It not only points out how to live, it also mirrors our failures. In Christ, we can also see it as gift.

A delightful command

When we are troubled, what a relief for a friend to say, "Hey, talk to me." Note—this is an *imperative* (a command). What a blessing that God lovingly *commands* us to talk to Him. It is no less than a word of welcome! Skim through **Psalm 119**, stopping at verses 24, 47, 77, 92, 143, 174 to read more closely. What common theme do you notice in these verses? Think about it and discuss it together. Read **Ephesians 6:18-20**. Who is stirring us to pray? What are we to ask?

A certain promise

Luther identifies another motivation for prayer: God promises to listen. Look at **Matthew 7:7-11** and **John 16:22-24**. Note the promises and the assurance that our heavenly Father is better than any earthly father. Consider the promise that as we ask in his name, our "joy will be full." Read **James 5:13-18**. The apostle James echoes his Lord urging prayer in His name (v. 14). He uses the example of Elijah to encourage us. Why does he link prayer together with confession of sins? Consider this in light of James' words about "the prayer of the righteous" (v. 16).

As noted previously these promises are sometimes misunderstood. Consider again the words "in Jesus' name" (in keeping with his purposes and will). Consider how God "raises" and "heals."

God-given words

The Bible is full of prayers that are recorded for us. Luther sees this is as more prayer encouragement from God. God Himself gives the Bible's prayers in the Psalms and elsewhere.

Consider that, like all of Scripture, the Bible's prayers are *inspired* words of God for us and for our learning. Skim through **Psalm 40**, which reminds us that God puts words in our mouths (v. 3). With this, God provides what might be counted a fourth reason to pray. By giving us the "words and approach we are to use" (*Large Catechism*) God shows us our greatest needs. All the world prays out of need, but Christians know both exactly where to turn—the true God—and also the deepest human needs, which God has shown us.

The prayer paradox

But, "Pastor, if God knows everything and He knows what is best and will do His will in the end, then do we really need to pray?" It is true that God never changes or wavers in doing what He says. He knows all before it happens and needs no information from us. Nevertheless, God urges us to pray throughout Scripture, for our greatest human need is to know Him and to relate to Him personally, hearing His Word, receiving His sacramental gifts, and responding in prayer.

"I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord" (Zeph. 3:9).

8

4: “This is how you should pray...”

(TPP, pages 36-42)

A.

Opening: *Pray Psalm 51:7-15*

Prayer is a universal practice, but Christians pray “in Jesus’ name,” that is, because of the Gospel of forgiveness which gives us confidence before God. Christian prayer actually comes as a response to God who commands our prayers, promises to hear them, gives us actual words to speak, and in so doing, helps us to know our deepest needs.

This is how you should pray...

Who teaches us to pray? “Jesus!” would be the children’s answer, and they’re right. But does that mean that the prayers of God’s people before Christ’s coming were inadequate? Not at all, for their faith was in the Christ to come who was promised and who spoke before His incarnation in the Spirit-given prayers of Israel.

- Christians pray the psalms and other Old Testament prayers, just as Jesus did when he joined in temple worship and prayer (**Lk 2:41-51; Jn 7:28; Acts 14:23; Col 3:16**).
- Christians pray personally, just as Jesus did (**Lk 9:18; Acts 10:30; Ph 4:5-6**).
- Christians pray for all—even enemies, just as Jesus did (**Mt 5:44; 1 Tim 2:1-2**).

More than just example

Read **1 Corinthians 12:12-13** and **Romans 12:4-5** and consider the importance of our incorporation *into* Christ. We have the example of Jesus’ prayer practice, but, more importantly, we have been *joined* to Christ as members of His body. Therefore, as Augustine says, “when the Body of the Son prays, it separates not its Head from itself: and it is . . . our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who both prays *for* us, and prays *in* us, and is *prayed to by* us” (TPP, 36).

Christ-focused prayer

Read and discuss **Psalm 4:3**, **Romans 8:15**, and **Galatians 4:6**. Our faith is focused on Jesus Christ and so also Christian prayer revolves around Him. In and with the Son of God, we know the Father. The Holy Spirit works faith in Jesus Christ and so, by Him, shows us that we are God’s children also and leads us to call Him “Abba, Father.”

The Son of God has become the Son of man, one with the Father and “He prays for us, as our Priest; He prays in us, as our Head; He is prayed to by us, as our God” (Augustine, TPP, 36)

9

B.

(*Pray Psalm 30 if this is a separate session*)

Children learn to speak from conversation with their parents. God’s children learn to speak to God from God. That way of learning is *reflected* throughout Scripture, but it *perfected* in Christ. In the revelation of God in Christ and the gift of the Spirit, we come to see that in a fundamental way, our prayers are *to* the Father, *through* the Son, *by* the Spirit.

Lord, teach us to pray

Luke 11:1-13 tells of the disciples’ request, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Jesus’ answer, in the following verses, includes both a prayer and a series of brief glimpses into human behavior that encourage prayer. In a little book called *Psalms: The Prayerbook of the Bible*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls it “pure grace” that God teaches us to speak to Him and he reminds us that children of God, just like children of men, learn to speak by listening. Nowhere is that more true than in the Lord’s Prayer itself.

The way or manner of Christian prayer

Jesus shows us *how*—the way—to talk to God. He gives us words—“say this”—and he also provides the “manner” in which God’s children pray, “for that is what we are” (**1 Jn 3:1**).

Children of God...for that is what we are!

Children talk even before they can articulate words, in cries, babbling, and gestures. They talk without inhibition in the confidence of childhood, especially to mother and father. So also, there is nothing for the believer to hide from God. Consider: **Psalm 5:1; Psalm 13:1; Psalm 38:9; Romans 8:26**. God encourages our prayer, even though what we ask may often be immature or even foolish.

Our status as children of God

See **John 20:17** and **Galatians 3:26-27**. Note the basis for our claim to be God’s children. It is a revealed truth, not a human deduction, that we are His. In baptism we are adopted, in Christ Jesus, who brings us to His Father and makes Him *our* Father. Nothing is too trivial for our Father.

Encouragement along the way (of prayer)

Sometimes our hearts become cool and we lose our way in prayer through weariness, busy-ness, doubts, inadequacies, and temptations. The Word of the Lord urges and encourages, showing us again and again prayer’s simplicity, giving reasons for confidence. Children are persistent—often annoyingly so—but in His only-begotten Son, the heavenly Father encourages all of His adopted children to be persistent and earnest in prayer. Read and discuss **Luke 18:1-8; Luke 10:2**. God knows our frailty (**Ps 38:8-9**), yet welcomes our prayers nonetheless. To us, too weak to bear life’s burdens alone, He gives the body of Christ to pray with and for us and calls us to pray for one another (**Lk 9:28; Col 4:2-3; 1 Thess 5:25; Jam 5:16**).

“All the prayers of Holy Scripture are summarized in the Lord’s Prayer, and they are contained in its immeasurable breadth. They are not made superfluous by the Lord’s Prayer but constitute the inexhaustible richness of the Lord’s Prayer as the Lord’s Prayer is their summation.” (D. Bonhoeffer, quoted in TPP, 37.)

10

5: Jesus’ prayer priorities—I

(TPP, pages 42-52)

A.

Opening: *Pray Psalm 113*

We pray as children speaking to their Father because our elder Brother urges it, showing us both our relationship to our Father and also our relationship with each other as brothers and sisters.

God welcomes all His children’s prayers—so does what we say in prayer matter?

Certainly, our life of prayer is not restricted, but set free because our Father wills to hear us. Every sincere, heartfelt prayer is welcomed by our heavenly Father—whether it is the simplest spontaneous prayer of a child or the most eloquent prayer of a great theologian. But the freedom to pray freely in our own words according to our heart’s concerns does not mean that we have no need to grow and mature in how and what we pray. The Word of God teaches not only a way of prayer—free and heartfelt—but also words for prayer that show us the heart of God.

Look at the following New Testament references and the Old Testament reference that accompanies it: **Matthew 27:46 (Ps 22); Luke 23:46 (Ps 31); Matthew 21:16 (Ps 8:2); Matthew 22:44 (Ps 110); John 10 (Ps 23, Ps 95)**. These verses show us that our Lord prayed and memorized psalms, the prayers of Israel. Praying with Jesus means praying Scripture and so praying the book of Psalms and, of course, the *Lord’s Prayer* also (**Mt 6:7-13**).

The First Petition: “Hallowed be thy name” (Mt 6:9)

Why is God’s holy name a priority? What is he teaching us? How might **1 Timothy 2:4** fit? Discuss this comment from Luther: “In this petition God becomes everything and man becomes nothing.” “God” only means the *real* God when the real God tells us who He is and what He intends and does for the world—as His Word teaches and enriches us (**Col 3:16**).

What’s in a name?

Leviticus 20:3 shows us that the right use of God’s name is serious business. He sets His face against those who profane it. **Leviticus 19:12** reminds us that either His name is hallowed or it is profaned. Note how He names himself: “I am who I am” or, as it can also be translated, “I will be who I will be” (**Ex 3:14**). We, in contrast, are who God has made us to be.

How is the name hallowed?

Ex 36:23 says literally: “I will hallow my great name.” God hallows His name by making Himself known in Word and sacred sign (the sacraments). So Luther explained: “God’s name is hallowed when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity and we, his children, lead holy lives.” His name is hallowed as He speaks to us and we speak back in Jesus’ name in prayer, for Jesus has “inherited” this holy name (**Hb 1:4**).

“If anyone suffers as a Christian...let him glorify God in that name” (1 Pet 4:16).

11

B.

(*Pray Psalm 122 if this is a separate session*)

The Second Petition: “Thy kingdom come” (Matt 6:10)

There is an awful lot of bad stuff in the world. Hmmm. Is God king or not?

God hallows His name by His Word—made flesh and spoken. Now the question is will the Word impact our lives? Or would we rather have some other ruler? (**Is 26:13**) How does this happen?

What is the kingdom all about?

It’s good news! (See **Mt 4:23**.) **Matthew 13** is all about the kingdom and its mysterious nature—see vv. 11, 24, 31, 44. Many miss it; Satan hates it; its power is mysterious; and its future makes it priceless. **Matthew 18:1-4** shows us who fits into the kingdom. So how does it come to us? By the Spirit as He hallows the name for us (**Jn 3:5; Rom 14:17**).

The kingdom comes when...

When the Spirit works faith in God’s Word, God’s kingly rule comes to us. Only by faith do people become joyful citizens of His kingdom (**1 Cor 12:3**). Of course, God is ruling in other ways, too, in such things as nature and government (a kingdom of power, not grace). And, also, we pray for the final, complete coming of His kingdom on the last day (**Rev 11:15**).

The Third Petition: “Thy will be done” (Mt 6:10)

Luke 11:1-4 does not have this petition, which summarizes the first two. A holy name plus kingdom presence equals the accomplishment of God’s will. Because God allows rebellion, his will isn’t done automatically. That’s the difference between heaven and earth and the reason we pray (or struggle; see **Gen 32:28**), since we are seeking God’s promised future.

The will of God

Read **1 Timothy 2:3-4**. God’s will is something far too deep for us in many ways. But one thing is crystal clear: His loving will for people to have His salvation.

God’s will is done when...

“He breaks and hinders every evil plan of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature... and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die” (*Small Catechism*). An unholy trinity of Satan, human rebellion, and individual sin would destroy us, but God’s will is to keep us safe with Him (**Ps 40:8; Ph 2:13; Jam 1:18**).

“We are capable of receiving His [God’s] works and His counsels only when our own counsels have ceased and our works have stopped and we are made purely passive before God, both with regard to our inner as well as our outward activities.” (Luther, quoted in TPP, 51.)

12

6: Jesus' prayer priorities—II

(TPP, pages 52-63)

A.**Opening: Pray Psalm 104**

Christian prayer, flowing from childlike faith, responds to God's command, His promise, and our need. We ask for His will as His name is hallowed and He rules in our lives—but what shall we pray about day-to-day living?

Fourth Petition: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Mt 6:11)

Read and briefly discuss **Exodus 16** as background to this petition. Consider the importance of the phrase "this day" and the words "daily bread." These words call to mind our most basic human needs and God's daily provision.

The Source of all good for all

Jesus teaches us to pray not only for eternal blessings (the name, kingdom, will of God), but also for daily blessings—and not for us alone, but for all (**Mt 6:26**).

Prayer with thanksgiving

This petition curbs our greed, diminishes anxiety and leads to thanksgiving. These words also connect us to one another and open our hearts to one another's needs as each one of us learns to pray for "our" daily bread and not "mine" alone (**Ph 4:6; 1 Tim 6:8**).

Fifth Petition: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Mat 6:12)

This petition leads us to acknowledge our guilt and need for forgiveness, in the recognition that our debt is greater than we can ever hope to pay (**Mt 18:23-35**).

Power in the plural

Christ, who became sin for us, leads us in this prayer. He has won forgiveness for all the world—for *all of us*. Forgiveness is not mine to keep for myself (**2 Cor 5:21; Lk 23:34; Eph 4:32**).

But I just can't forgive...

God can, however, and He puts words of forgiveness for all of "us" into this petition. We struggle to forgive when we see the sins of others apart from our own. In this petition Jesus has us praying against such feelings, based on His death for all (**Rom 5:6-8**).

God wishes "to draw us to himself so that we may humble ourselves before him, lament our misery and plight, and pray for grace and help" (Luther, quoted in TPP, 56).

B.**(Pray Psalm 140 if this is a separate session)**

Sin is a constant and evil surrounds us. How will we live in this world?

Sixth Petition: "And lead us not into temptation" (Mt 6:13)

As we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," we are recalling Satan and his work (**1 Pet 5:8**), for he seeks to tempt us to sin (**Mt 18:7**). Jesus, who was tempted for us, is our strength in temptation (see **Lk 22:40** and **Hb 4:15**).

God tempts no one, but...

This petition can be misunderstood, but **James 1:13** reminds us God does not lead us into sin. Rather, it is true that as Satan is tempting, God is testing—to get us to rely on Him.

Our weakness, God's strength

We are too weak to withstand the attack, but God isn't. So we rely on Him to keep us from false belief and despair (**2 Pet 2:1, Mt 27:4-5**).

Seventh Petition: "But deliver us from evil" (Mt 6:13)

"Evil" summarizes the human problem, and the reason we need to pray. Our deliverance comes in Christ and will be total in the resurrection (**Ps 140:1-2, 13; Gal 1:3-4**).

Deliverance from every evil

We have no strength in ourselves against evil (**Rom 7:19; Ps 79:9-13**), but the Lord is faithful in preserving us against every evil of every sort (**2 Th 3:3; Eph 5:15-16**).

Overcoming evil

Consider how God's goodness overcomes evil (**Rom 12:21**) because Christ—in whom there is no evil—is able to overcome it (**Lk 23:22**). He does so in His atoning death and by the work of the Spirit who keeps us in faith to the end (**Gal 1:4; 2 Tim 4:18**).

Amen! Yes, Yes, it shall be!

We conclude the prayer ("For thine is the kingdom...") with confidence anchored in faith in God. The "Amen" (which is translated "truly") says that this prayer is pleasing to God, and reflects the assurance we have regarding everything Jesus teaches and accomplishes for us (e.g., **Mt 18:3**).

"Having said, 'Deliver us from evil,' there remains nothing beyond for us to ask for... we stand secure and safe, against all things that the Devil and the world work against us" (Cyprian, quoted in TPP, 61).

POLICY
for
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD
Declaring
ALTAR AND PULPIT FELLOWSHIP
with
ANOTHER CHURCH BODY*

Article III of the constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod 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 policy statement describes the procedure which The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod follows in declaring Church Fellowship with another church body.

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” and is therefore responsible for all church relations matters involving the Synod and other church bodies.

- 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.”
- c) He or his representative shall represent the Synod in official contacts with other church bodies.
(Bylaw 3.3.1.1.2 (a)(b)(c))

*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. This revised policy incorporates subsequent convention action (2010 Res. 3-04A) and also includes policy guidelines for recognizing as a partner church a former mission of the Synod that achieves self-governing status. Citations of the LCMS Constitution and bylaws are from the most recent (2013) *Synod Handbook*.

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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 Commission 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. (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2(a)(b)(c)(d))

3. The Synod in Convention

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention, acting on the basis of a recommendation of the CTCR, declares altar and pulpit fellowship with another church body.

In cases wherein the President of Synod has declared a recognition of altar and pulpit fellowship with “a small, formative, emerging confessional Lutheran church body” the subsequent Synod convention is asked to endorse the declaration. (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2(c))

4. Members of the Synod

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 declared. Moreover, members and officers shall consult with the Office of the President 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 article VI of the Synod’s Constitution; also Bylaws 3.8.3; 6.1.1).

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 declared in the following manner.

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II. Basic Considerations

In considering whether the Synod should declare 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 as its basis agreement “in doctrine and in all its articles.” (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 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)

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3. Altar and pulpit fellowship is a formal relationship between two autonomous church bodies that are institutionally viable.

In addition to agreement in confession, factors to be taken into account in making a recommendation for altar and pulpit fellowship with another church body include its history, size, self-understanding, and confessional and organizational 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 is appropriate. In the case of a small, formative, emerging confessional church body without extensive structures or organizations a simpler process is appropriate.

4. Altar and pulpit fellowship is a relationship which 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 Commission on Theology and Church Relations will take into account the responses of the Synod’s partner churches in reaching its recommendation regarding the possibility of church fellowship with this church body.

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, following consultation with the CTCR, is responsible for formally initiating this process. He will inform the CTCR of this decision, as well as the Synod itself and, immediately thereafter, the partner churches of the LCMS. The President 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. Working together with the head of the church body with which church fellowship is contemplated, the President shall arrange for formal doctrinal discussions between representatives of the two church bodies. Synod representatives to these discussions shall be appointed by the President of the Synod, preferably including representation from CTCR membership or staff. These representatives shall report regularly to the President on these doctrinal discussions.
3. At the conclusion of these discussions, a comprehensive written report shall be prepared by the Synod representatives for presentation to the President. The President shall formally forward this report to the CTCR, together with his recommendation regarding church fellowship with this church body.

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4. Following its review of this report and the President's recommendation, the CTCR shall either recommend that the Synod declare altar and pulpit fellowship with this church body, or that it decline to do so.
 5. If the CTCR declines to approve 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 shall inform this church body of the CTCR's action. Continued discussion and consideration may follow. If the concerns which caused the Commission 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.
 6. If the CTCR recommends that the Synod enter into altar and pulpit fellowship with this church body, it shall immediately report this to the President of the Synod. The President shall inform this church, and also all of 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 recommending church fellowship (see Bylaw 3.3.1.1.2 (b)).
- 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:
1. When fellowship with such a church body is initially requested, the church shall be asked to share 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 President of the Synod, assisted by the CTCR at his request, 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, following consultation with the CTCR, is responsible for formally initiating this process. He will inform the Praesidium and the CTCR, as well as the Synod itself and, immediately thereafter, 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,

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- one of which shall preferably be a member of the CTCR (inclusive of 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 comprehensive written report, including relevant doctrinal materials (cf. #1 above), to the President of the Synod and to the CTCR. After consideration of this comprehensive report, the CTCR shall formally forward to the President its recommendation regarding church fellowship with this church body.
 5. 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 Commission 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 members of the Synod, and the Synod's partner churches.
 6. If the Commission recommends the declaration of fellowship with this church, the President, after consultation with the Praesidium, shall either declare recognition of fellowship 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 members of the Synod, and the Synod's partner or partner churches. If the President declares recognition of fellowship, he shall inform the church requesting fellowship, the members of the Synod, and also all of the Synod's partner churches of this action.
 7. 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 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 (see Bylaw 3.3.1.1.2 (b)).
- 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.

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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 Office of International Mission. 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 (see Bylaw 3.3.1.1.2 (b)).

Adopted as revised May 16, 2014
Commission on Theology and Church Relations
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective¹

"Gender" has become a matter of uncertainty. Rather than male or female, many see gender as a relative matter, or even a continuum. They consider gender or sexual identity to be less a reality given at conception than a matter of personal discovery.² Reflective of such a theoretical perspective, increasing attention is also given to individuals who are *personally* uncertain about their own gender or sexual identity—in particular, individuals who are "transsexual" or "transgendered,"³ as well as those who identify themselves as "bisexual" or are "questioning" their gender and in the process of determining what they perceive to be their true gender identity.⁴

In recent years the Commission on Theology and Church Relations has been asked about the specific matter of transsexual or transgendered individuals. Questions have come from individuals with personal questions about sexual identity including persons who are uncertain whether they are "truly" male or female, others who are regularly dressing and presenting themselves as a member of the opposite sex, and still others who are participating in hormonal or surgical procedures to change their sex identification from male to female or from female to male. In addition to concerns from individuals questioning their sexual identity, church workers have asked for guidance in pastoral care for individuals struggling with matters of gender identity.

The following pages will consider, first, some of the current psychotherapeutic perspectives of the American Psychiatric Association. Those perspectives are important, yet Christian churches see a theological understanding as grounded in the higher authority of God's revelation in Scripture. Thus the remainder of the report provides theological reflection on the topic of sexual identity and suggestions for pastoral care.

¹ As Lutheran Christians, a consideration of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on this and any topic is grounded in belief in the full authority of Holy Scripture as God's infallible Word and the conviction that the Confessions of the Lutheran Church are a truthful interpretation of the Scriptures. The general perspective of this report, however, is one that is not simply that of the Lutheran theological tradition, but rather stands within the broad (catholic) consensus of traditional Christian teaching.

² This is an element of what is sometimes referred to in gender studies as the "social constructionism" movement in psychological theory. As an example, see Rachel Alsop, et al., *Theorizing Gender: An Introduction* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

³ For the purposes of this document, the definitions of transsexual and transgender used by the American Psychiatric Association are utilized. See the text below under Psychotherapeutic Considerations for those definitions (p. 2).

⁴ Note the familiar acronym LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered) to which is now frequently added Q for Questioning—LGBTQ. Both acronyms are regularly present not only in secular discussions, but also in ecclesial settings. Ecclesial LGBTQ lobbies have pressed church bodies to make changes allowing ordination into the ministry and religious blessing of same-sex unions or marriages of practicing homosexual persons. Such lobbies are also advocates for Bisexual and Transgendered individuals and others who are Questioning their sexual identity.

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insufficient to label gender dysphoria without a disorder of sex development as a form of intersexuality limited to the central nervous system.¹¹

Gender dysphoria in both children and adults is reportedly more prevalent in males than in females. For adults identified as male at birth, the incidence reported in DSM-5 is between 0.005% to 0.014% (5-14 cases in every 100,000 males). For adults identified as female at birth, the rate is from 0.002-0.003% (2-3 cases in every 100,000 females). No global prevalence data is offered for gender dysphoria in children, but the ratio from many international studies again suggests a greater rate of occurrence in boys compared to girls (between 2 and 4.5 times as often for boys as for girls). In a final note on prevalence, however, DSM-5 indicates that Japan and Poland report more sexual dysphoria in females than in males.¹² (No further information on any of the data is given and DSM-5 does not indicate either the sources of the research or its sample populations.)

In an online pamphlet released in advance of DSM-5, gender dysphoria is described as follows:

For a person to be diagnosed with gender dysphoria, there must be a marked difference between the individual's expressed/experienced gender and the gender others would assign him or her, and it must continue for at least six months. In children, the desire to be of the other gender must be present and verbalized. This condition causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Gender dysphoria is manifested in a variety of ways, including strong desires to be treated as the other gender or to be rid of one's sex characteristics, or a strong conviction that one has feelings and reactions typical of the other gender.¹³

DSM-5 itself states: "*Gender dysphoria* refers to the distress that may accompany the incongruence between one's experienced or expressed gender and one's assigned gender." It furthermore indicates that "[t]he current term is more descriptive than the previous DSM-IV term *gender identity disorder* and focuses on dysphoria as the clinical problem, not identity per se."¹⁴ In taking this stance, the APA is acknowledging both the afore-mentioned debate and also the complexity of the research that has been conducted in this area. While an intersex condition (see below) is rather distinctive and clearly involves biological and genetic criteria, the causes of individual distress over one's apparent sex—one's "natal gender"¹⁵—are highly complex. There is no certain physiological or genetic cause for such dysphoria.

¹¹ DSM-5, 457. In other words, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that gender dysphoria has a biological cause unless it is accompanied by sexual ambiguity of a physical nature (intersex condition or DSD). DSM-5 cites evidence that hormonal levels for natal males with sexual dysphoria are similar to those for the male population without sexual dysphoria. Hormonal levels for natal females with sexual dysphoria indicate a slightly higher, but statistically insignificant, level of testosterone than found in the average female population.

¹² DSM-5, 454.

¹³ See <http://www.dsm5.org/Documents/Gender%20Dysphoria%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf> (accessed 29 Oct. 2013).

¹⁴ DSM-5, 451; emphasizes in the original.

¹⁵ The term "natal gender" is used and defined in DSM-5, 451 as the identity associated with biological indicators that is given to an individual at birth.

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Psychotherapeutic Considerations

The American Psychiatric Association's (APA) 1994 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition* (DSM-IV) listed four criteria required for a person to be diagnosed with *gender identity disorder* (i.e., as a transsexual or transgendered individual):

- Strong and persistent cross-gender identification;
- Persistent discomfort about one's assigned sex or a sense of inappropriateness in the gender-role of that sex;
- The individual does *not* have a concurrent physical intersex condition [hermaphroditism];
- Clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.⁵

In recent years, these criteria and the APA's 1994 categorization of the condition as a "disorder" have stirred controversy within the psychotherapeutic community together with impassioned debate. The primary concern that many have had with DSM-IV has been the assumption that identifying with a gender other than the one assigned at birth is a "disorder." The label "disorder" is thought to imply a value judgment. For example, the doctor who chaired the gender identity disorder committee of the APA has been criticized by many because he advocates cognitive behavioral treatment for the disorder in children (although he does not advocate such treatment for adults).⁷

As a result of the debate the most recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition* (DSM-5), released in May of 2013, discontinued the term "gender identity disorder" in favor of "gender dysphoria."⁸ DSM-5 distinguishes between gender dysphoria in children and adults. It defines "transgender" persons as those "who transiently or persistently identify with a gender different from their natal gender" and "transsexual" persons as those who either seek or have undergone "a social transition from male to female or female to male" whether or not that entails hormonal or surgical treatments.⁹ DSM-5 continues to maintain a distinction between sexual dysphoria and an intersex condition (in which an individual has physically or genetically ambiguous sexual traits). "Overall, current evidence is

⁵ A hermaphrodite is a person having both male and female sexual tissues. It is an older term for a condition now included under the term "intersex" which is defined in the body of this section or described by the phrase "disorder of sex development" (DSD).

⁶ DSM-IV (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994) 537-538.

⁷ Dr. Kenneth Zucker is a sexologist who specializes in the care of children with gender dysphoria. He favors cognitive behavioral therapy only in children and disavows reparative therapy for homosexuals. "Kenneth Zucker," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_Zucker> (accessed: 29 October 2013). Cognitive behavioral therapy in this context may be generally defined as a therapeutic process that attempts to help an individual change their sexual identity. In this case, Zucker's approach seeks to help children who are identifying with the opposite sex to be accepting of their own sex as a boy or girl.

⁸ DSM-IV and predecessor editions were identified by Roman numerals when abbreviated. DSM-5 uses the Arabic numeral.

⁹ DSM-5 (Arlington, Virginia: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 451-459. Dysphoria is medically defined as "an emotional state marked by anxiety, depression, and restlessness" (dysphoria. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Houghton Mifflin Company. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/dysphoria> [accessed: 29 October 2013]).

¹⁰ DSM-5, 451.

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The change in terminology from DSM-IV to DSM-5 is significant because it indicates a reluctance to identify the confusion that an individual may feel about whether he or she is male or female, despite his or her natal gender, as a clinical problem. Rather than an identity disorder, DSM-5 only recognizes the distress the individual feels as a treatable problem. This suggests that the debate with its consequent conceptual and terminological changes has occurred in large measure because a value judgment is perceived to be at the heart of the notion that cross-gender identification is itself a "disorder" and therefore detrimental or negative.

Viewing sexual identity from a perspective of ordered or disordered implies a moral judgment, with "good" versus "bad" implied. Such moral reflection has been progressively excluded from the fields of psychology and psychiatry in recent decades. The elimination of homosexuality from the list of psychiatric disorders on December 15, 1973 is a relevant example. That elimination was grounded primarily in the conviction that it was a moral value judgment to declare homosexuality a psychiatric disorder that should be treated.

The continuing debate regarding homosexual conduct in the United States is in large measure a debate between a biblical and traditionally Christian understanding of the moral quality of homosexual behavior and the understanding, adopted by an increasing percentage of those in the psychiatric community since 1973, that homosexuality is either a natural condition or a valid lifestyle alternative. The underlying question is whether there is space for moral judgment in determining human behavior that requires psychiatric or psychological therapeutic care. The trajectory of past thinking and current DSM judgments indicates a similar perspective about matters of gender identity, namely, that such dysphoria should not be viewed in any way that involves moral judgment. The APA therefore approaches such an issue from a significantly different standpoint than the standpoint of Christian theology.

Christian Moral Reflection on Gender Identity

Christian theological and moral reflection on matters of gender identity must note the trajectory indicated above and its basis in the 1973 decision of the APA. An underlying assumption of those who press for changes in the church's understanding of homosexual behavior has been that one's embodiment should not be a determinative factor in moral behavior. In other words, simply because one is physically male, he should not have to accept that the natural and God-pleasing sexual expression appropriate to him should be toward females. And, if one is physically female, she should not feel morally compelled to restrict any sexual desires for women. Similarly, one who has sexual desire for both men and women, should not seek to deny such desires or feel compelled to restrict his or her sexual contact only to the opposite sex. And, lastly, just because one has male genitalia, one should not be encouraged to seek treatment for the fact that one feels more like a female.

The entire Christian tradition and the majority of Christian churches today have opposed such changes in perspective. The basis for such opposition is precisely because our embodiment is understood as an aspect of our creation by God and therefore instructive regarding behavior that is good and pleasing to Him. Human embodiment indicates simply and eloquently God's

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intention for sexual activity—that male and female by becoming “one flesh” might end their aloneness in lifelong unity with one another and, according to God’s blessing, in the procreation of children (Gen 1:26-28; Gen 2:18-24). Homosexual or bisexual desire and activity is therefore viewed as aberrant (see Gen 19:4-11; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:9; and 1 Tim 1:10), because it contradicts the meaning and purpose of one’s embodiment as male or female.

This biblical view is not unrealistic about human nature in a fallen world. It is true that one result of sin is that desires and behavior become disordered. Husbands and wives inevitably experience (and too frequently act out) sexual desire for men and women other than their spouses. In other cases, men and women experience (and frequently act out) desire for individuals of their same sex.

The very same line of thought would apply to one who is embodied as a man but feels persistent discomfort with his maleness or for a person with a female body who believes she is male. From the standpoint of our bodies—which is the only objective means of determining who is male or female—we have a God-given identity that is either masculine or feminine. One is a man or a woman because that is what the body given by God indicates.¹⁶

Christian theology has consistently sought to distinguish desires and feelings from behavior. Greed, rage, jealousy, resentment, arrogance, depression, and the many shapes that lust can take are but a few examples of feelings or desires that every human experiences to various degrees and at various times. Such desires are part of fallen human nature itself (e.g., Gal 5:17 or 1 John 2:16), but they are to be opposed and curbed, rather than to be given free reign (Rom 13:14). The Christian theological tradition has therefore sought always to distinguish between desires and acting out on desires, and between specific behavioral sins and the sinner. It recognizes that in our fallen humanity, behavior *can* be disciplined to some degree, while inner feelings are far less subject to human control.

Christianity understands homosexuality, bisexuality, or transgendered identity and desire within such an overall moral framework. It seeks to follow natural law (the objective truth of our bodies) and the revealed truth of Holy Scriptures, even if the truth these sources convey conflicts with societal or professional opinions, such as that of psychology or psychiatry.

One response to such reflection is that, while there is scriptural direction which clearly forbids homosexual activity, there is no explicit scriptural reference to transgendered individuals. There are only references that hint at implications for the individual who feels discomfort with his or her identity as male or female.¹⁷

¹⁶ This does not deny the reality of situations in which there is sexual ambiguity that is physical or biological in nature. See the excursus on Intersex below for further consideration of biological sexual ambiguity.

¹⁷ There is, indeed, no explicit mention, much less extended discussion *per se* in the Bible, of transsexual or transgendered persons or persons experiencing distress over their physical sexual embodiment. Deuteronomy 22:5 is, however, a strong condemnation of wearing the garments of the opposite sex. Some argue that such an Old Testament reference has no applicability to Christians. A more classical Christian interpretation is that this verse represents an example of “moral law” with continuing applicability. Moreover, St. Paul’s reference to “effeminate” in 1 Cor 6:9 (New American Standard and King James Version; the New International Version translates the term as

Jesus, however, grounds sexual morality not only in revelatory truth, but also in our created nature (see Matt 19:1-9). When he condemns divorce, he does so because, from the very beginning, “the Creator” (NIV: “he who created them” NAS ESV NRSV) has made us male and female (Matt 19:4). Jesus points to our creation as male and female and therefore endorses the conclusion that “a man shall leave his father and mother, be united to his wife, and the two become one flesh,” quoting Genesis 2:24. As one flesh, the man and woman have been joined by God and should not separate.

Paul speaks within the same context of male and female and the same foundational passage from Genesis in his teaching on marriage (Eph 5:22-33). And as he further discusses sexual morality in marital and unmarried life (cf. 1 Cor 6:12-7:40), he does so from within a perspective that acknowledges our created embodiment as male and female (“glorify God in your body,” 1 Cor 6:20), the expectation of sexual self-control whether married or unmarried (1 Cor 6:18; 7:5, 9), the call to live the life we have been given (vocation, 1 Cor 7:17, 24), and the priority of serving God in our daily lives (1 Cor 7:32).

The reasoning of Scripture regarding our sexual nature is therefore inarguable. In addition to the previous passages, Paul’s discussion of homosexuality in Romans 1 is important. He considers homosexual acts in the context of one particular trait of human sin: the suppression of the truth (Rom 1:18). He gives two examples of suppressing truth. The first is our refusal to acknowledge the divine power and nature which alone could bring about the created world, which results in humans worshiping creatures instead of the Creator (Rom 1:19-23, also v. 25). Paul’s second example results from the first: because we worship the creation and not the Creator, we are also given to dishonoring our bodies rather than seeking the will of the Creator for their proper use. This, Paul says, is the reason humanity is even willing to ignore the obvious intention of our creation as male and female and exchange “natural relations for those that are contrary to nature” as women engage in sexual relations with other women and men engage in sexual relations with other men (Rom 1:24-27). Paul’s understanding of the immorality of homosexual activity is grounded in our created nature as sexual beings, our embodiment as man or woman, and is not understood as an arbitrary moral rule revealed by God.

Moreover, within the Lutheran theological tradition, one may note the relevance of the explanation of the first article of the Creed by Martin Luther. Having confessed, “I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth,” Luther’s answer to the question, “What does this mean?” is directly applicable to this discussion: “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*....”¹⁸

“male prostitutes”) is a likely reference to individual men who “cultivate feminine features.” Cf. Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 307-308. ¹⁸ Emphasis added. The translation of the Small Catechism is from Luther’s *Small Catechism with Explanation* (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1998, 2005), 15. Cf. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 354, which reads “all limbs” rather than members, in translating the German *Glleder*. The term *Glleder*, however, is used to refer to all body parts. Moreover, the Latin version of the Small Catechism reads “*omnia membra*” for the text in question.

To declare faith in the work of God’s creation in our lives is to confess that our bodies, with all their parts—including our sexual organs¹⁹—are given to us by God our heavenly Father. The parts of the body are arranged and appointed “each one of them, as he chose” (1 Cor 12:18). It is from this consideration of the creation of the human body with all its members that the inspired apostle then develops the rich and beautiful image of the church as the body of Christ with all its members.

A biblical approach to sexual morality, therefore, is not simply grounded in specific Bible passages alone. It is grounded, first, in the truth of our nature as created beings (“natural law”) as that is understood in Scripture. From this standpoint, the Christian understanding of confused sexual identity is clear. Because Christianity takes our created bodies seriously, it is compelled to view it as a *disorder* of creation if a man or woman feels discomfort with his or her body and desires either to dress and act in the manner of the opposite sex or to “change” his or her sex by means of hormones or surgery. Ultimately, such feelings or actions are fruitless violations of our nature. Such surgery, for example, will not change the individual’s chromosomal makeup, but will only mutilate the body God has given.

Excursus: Intersex Condition as an Area of Special Concern

One special area of concern must be discussed in this context. DSM-IV criteria (above) explicitly excluded from the diagnosis of sexual identity disorder individuals with “intersex” condition, but such persons should not be forgotten in a Christian moral and pastoral discussion of gender dysphoria. An intersex condition in humans can take two forms, one in which both male and female gonads are present at birth and the individual has both male (XY) and female (XX) chromosomes. The second form involves the chromosomes and gonads of one sex but the physical appearance of the opposite sex.²⁰ As noted above, DSM-5 maintains a distinction between intersexuality and sexual dysphoria.

All creation displays the results of sin and death, even though God created the world to be a place of goodness and life. Such is the sobering assessment of Christian reflection on the fall into sin. Congenital disorders and other examples of nature in rebellion against humanity, of which an intersex condition would be an example, are understood from a Christian theological perspective as examples of creation in “bondage to corruption” as a result of the corrupting force of the fall into sin (see Gen 3:16-19; Rom 8:20-23).

While an individual with hermaphroditic features may not fit the concept of gender identity disorder (by DSM-IV’s standard) or the concept of being transgendered, such a person will likely know some measure of distress or dysphoria and might well seek pastoral guidance and direction. Here the guidance would be more dependent upon medical advice than any particular

¹⁹ Perhaps Paul’s reference to our “unpresentable parts” in 1 Corinthians 12:23 is worth mentioning. The context of 1 Corinthians 12 is one in which he affirms the richness of the body of Christ by means of analogy to the human body, the parts of which, are all afforded high regard and worth. That includes the sexual “members” of the body which, while treated with modesty, are nonetheless worthy of equal regard to eyes, ears, noses, hands, and feet which are ever active and noticeable. See Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 446-447, for a discussion of the “inferior” members of the body.

²⁰ “hermaphroditism.” *Encyclopedia Britannica* 2013. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Accessed 29 Oct. 2013 <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/263151/hermaphroditism>>.

scriptural position. The fundamental Christian perspective would be to encourage treatment of the condition in a way that allows the greatest possible fullness of service to Christ and others by the individual. This may well entail hormonal or surgical options that enable the person to deal most effectively with the biological sexual ambiguity which is present.

Pastoral Care for Gender Identity Confusion

A pastoral response to individuals with any form of gender dysphoria requires a clear grounding in a biblically based understanding of natural law and our creation by God as male and female. A biblical understanding of both the gravity of sin’s effects and the Gospel of redemption from sin by grace through faith in Jesus Christ is also necessary. But such doctrinal awareness is not the sum of pastoral care. The church’s ministry is instead always anchored in the responsibility to proclaim, reflect, and enact the love of God in Christ Jesus—his love for a fallen world—in the lives of specific individuals.

The pastor will understand that the person who is struggling with sexual identity is indeed dealing with a grave disorder, but he will also understand that the deepest need of such a man or woman—as it is for every person—is to know that he or she is beloved by God. Christ’s love and forgiveness are in this case as always one’s greatest needs. Sorrow, confusion, frustration, shame, and despair are likely present in any individual dealing with gender dysphoria or struggling with questions about his or her identity as male or female. If such an individual has not already sought psychotherapeutic care, the pastor should seek to encourage and, to whatever degree possible, facilitate the individual in securing competent therapy that is not hostile to the Christian faith.²¹

While it is unlikely that the pastor is trained or equipped to serve as a therapist for this condition, the value of pastoral care and counsel should not be minimized. The pastor has the opportunity to provide compassionate care anchored in the Word of God—care that recognizes both the power of sin and the even stronger, gracious acceptance of our Lord Jesus for humanity despite our sins and weaknesses (Mark 9:17-27; Luke 19:10).

Pastoral care for such a person struggling with sexual identity does not begin with debates about what is or is not moral. Certainly, the Christian pastor is called to help an individual struggling with sexual identity to understand the biblical view of human sexuality and to distinguish between his or her feelings and actions based on those feelings. The rightfully persistent idea of loving the sinner even as one discourages specific sins is vital here as it is in every situation of pastoral care and moral guidance.

²¹ It would be good for every pastor to know of therapists who are clinically competent to provide therapy to individuals in need. That may not always be easily accomplished. It is true that there are some therapists who are suspicious of or even hostile to the Christian faith and biblical teaching, particularly with respect to sexual morality. A pastor may wish to consult with the American Association of Christian Counselors (<http://www.aacc.net/resources/find-a-counselor/>).²¹

More important for pastoral care, however, is the development of genuine Christian friendship modeled after the One whose friendship knows no boundaries (Luke 7:34). Loving pastoral care for the individual seeks to provide a spiritually nurturing, encouraging, and accepting “safe place” to someone who may well have suffered from actual or perceived ostracism, mockery, and animosity. He or she may view the church with suspicion or share the common assumption that Christianity is more concerned with moral judgments, cultural battles, or political victories than about broken and suffering people. In accepting the struggling individual, a relationship of interpersonal trust develops. Within that relationship there will be natural opportunities to make Christ known, to call the person to trust in his promises and love, and to show that the purposes and commands of God for our lives are for our good.

Pastoral care in such circumstances will be challenging, to put it mildly. Individuals who have had sexual reassignment procedures and then come to the conviction that their actions were mistakes and were not God-pleasing will need special care and encouragement.²² In addition to encouraging competent therapy (as noted above), the work of pastoral care for a such persons will seek to treat their immediate *spiritual* needs, dividing Law and Gospel with care and helping them to accept what may well be a permanent, difficult reality (cf. 2 Cor 12:7-9). Specific strategies for working toward a renewed and God-pleasing life will differ from case to case. In such cases it may be advisable for the pastor to seek permission to discuss the case with the individual’s therapist. At all times, communicating the important truth of God’s persisting love for us, no matter what we have done in and to our lives, is the center of the pastor’s care.

If the pastor is caring for a person who is struggling with sexual identity but rejects the Christian church’s guidance in this matter, the pastoral task is similar to many other instances of pastoral care in the face of sin and fallenness. Admonition and the call to repentance are needed; some measure of Christian discipline may also become necessary. Pastors regularly require patience in both holding to the truth of God’s Word while just as patiently seeking to provide loving support as they seek to bring to repentance those who do not see that truth clearly or are otherwise inclined to reject it. Support and counsel from others, including fellow clergy and others who are in ministry, is vital to the pastor. This also includes seeking guidance from Christians who work in the mental health professions.

In closing, the important pastoral tool of individual confession and absolution should not be neglected, but coupled with pastoral counsel and genuine Christian friendship. Nothing is more powerful in the life of every person—for all of us fallen people—than the forgiveness that is given through the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus. It is the greatest responsibility and privilege of pastoral care to proclaim Christ’s forgiveness, freely and graciously given, and received simply by faith in our Lord’s promises.

*Adopted Saturday, May 17, 2014
Commission on Theology and Church Relations
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*

²² There have been a few cases when transsexuals engaged in further medical procedures to attempt to restore the physical traits of their natal gender. However, that will often be an unrealistic if not impossible goal.

Knowing What We Seek and Why We Come¹

Questions and Answers concerning the Communing of Infants and Young Children

(Note: This document, together with the document *Response to the Request for a Supplement to the 1997 CTCR Opinion: Response to "Concerns of the South Wisconsin District Circuits 18 and 19 Regarding Infant Communion,"* was prepared by the CTCR in response to a November 9, 2012 request by LCMS President Matthew Harrison for a supplement to the 1997 CTCR opinion *Response to "Concerns of the South Wisconsin District Circuits 18 and 19 Regarding Infant Communion."*)

Introduction

On that holy night when our Lord was betrayed, almost immediately after He instituted the sacrament of His Holy Supper, a dispute broke out among the disciples, Saint Luke tells us, a dispute "as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest" (Luke 22:24). We are ashamed to read that before the aroma of this gift of the Lord's own body and blood had faded from the room, the recipients of this meal should be battling over which of them at the table was the greatest. And yet, we must admit (also with shame), that no small number of disputes has arisen concerning this meal and among His disciples in the days since. There is, in fact, and somewhat ironically, a dispute or at least a very serious conversation going on among the Lord's disciples today as to who should be *least* at the table, least in the sense not of value or worth but of size and age. Questions of curiosity, interest, concern, and even conscience have been raised not only throughout the church catholic, but among us, as well, in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with respect to the sharing in the Lord's Supper of young children and infants.²

We in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod cherish this "holy and precious meal" and hunger for the sustenance and strength it provides us throughout our earthly pilgrimage.³ Since even earthly parents know how to give good gifts to their children, none of us would wish to withhold from our children good gifts from the Lord. Although there is precedent for the practice of paedocommunion in the history of the church, there have always been questions regarding its appropriateness raised by Christians as well. There is today renewed interest in this practice on the part of the church in many places in the world and on the part of some members of the LCMS.

In the hopes of moving forward in a way that might be pleasing to God and satisfying to His church, we will here try to guide the dispute into conversation and let the conversation begin by hearing what our history, our Scriptures, our Confessions, and the needs of those under our care have to say on this important question.

¹ Cf. Luther, *Large Catechism*, Fifth Part: The Sacrament of the Altar (line 2): "For we do not intend to admit to the sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come." *The Book of Concord*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 447.

² In order to make the language a little less cumbersome, from this point forward the term *paedocommunion* will be used to refer to the communing of children. The Greek word *παῖς* (*pais*, "a child, a youth") does not carry very specific age limits with it, so the compound is also somewhat imprecise. Unless qualified by an age, the term will be used in this paper to refer to the communing of children within the age range stretching from infancy to puberty.

³ Cf. "What about the Sacrament of the Altar" by A. L. Barry. Download available at <http://lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=726&DocID=1088>.

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Question 1: What historical precedent is there for paedocommunion?

From the information we have available, we must admit that there is no evidence for a widespread practice of paedocommunion in the earliest centuries of the church's history following the time of the Apostles. In documents dating from the middle of the third century of our era, there begin to appear references to the practice. The churches that belong to the eastern side of the East-West division of the church have maintained the practice of infant communion since ancient times. In the West, however, the practice waxed and waned in connection with various competing understandings of the Supper and the right reception of it. The practice all but ceased to exist in the western churches around the year 1200, although there continued to be diversity in the age of first communion. In the early 1400s, the followers of John Hus (though not Hus himself apparently) introduced the practice of communing infants along with the practice of giving lay people the cup as well as the host. The Bohemians continued this practice in Luther's day.

In his study, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church*, Arthur Repp provides a detailed but succinct summary of the practices among Lutherans in the sixteenth century:

[T]he usual age of the catechumen who partook of his first Communion was quite early when compared to present-day [1964] practice. Indeed, age was not regarded an important criterion. The major criterion was the catechumen's readiness to partake of the Sacrament. Almost invariably the church orders used an expression such as "when the children have come of age." According to German law, this was at the age 12; according to Roman canon law, it could be interpreted variously as from 7 to 12.

Where a reference to confirmation age appears, the age is rarely higher than 12. Thus Hohenlohe, 1577, and Ansbach, 1564, specify 12. The same age is suggested by Allstedt, 1533, and Lindow in Pomerania, 1571. The former states that persons over 12 are to be subject to a personal tax, while the latter requires 12-year-olds to contribute to the pastor's support. In both instances, it may be assumed that the age was set at 12 because persons were normally confirmed or communicants by that time. Lower Austria, 1571, sets a range between 10 and 15. Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach, 1556, indicates that the age for first Communion was to be 12 or over. Braunschweig, 1542, suggests that the former custom of confirming at 10 or 11 be retained. The Church Order of Sweden, drawn up by Laurentius Petri (1499-1573) in 1571, states that no child younger than 9, or 8 at the least, should attend the Lord's Supper. "For younger children can have little exact knowledge of the Sacrament." During the 16th century the children in Denmark were often admitted to Communion when they were only 6 or 7.

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This seems to be the limit of verifiable generalizations concerning 16th-century Lutheran confirmation practice.⁴

The situation in nineteenth century North America showed little change, except that the influences of rationalism and pietism encouraged later rather than earlier confirmation and, thus, first communion. Repp provides the following excerpt from Løhe's *Agenda*:

Admission to the examination should not be determined by a specified age. In fact few will be mature enough before ten or eleven. One should therefore keep in mind children of this age and older. But this should not eliminate a younger child whom the pastor or parents regard as sufficiently mature, so that he is not turned back simply because of his age... Not age but the required ability of 1 Cor. 11:28 to examine oneself is to be decisive in every case.⁵

In his *Pastoraltheologie*, Walther wrote that "the completion of the twelfth year" is the earliest age (in most cases) at which a child should be confirmed.⁶ The first *Constitution of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States* included a quite detailed description of the requirements for confirmation, although no age (minimum or average) was given. The *Constitution* did state: "If possible, up to 100 hours are to be used in confirmation instruction."⁷

Question 2: What should we learn from this?

It is necessary for an informed consideration of these questions that we know our own history with regard to paedocommunion. Because the evidence is scattered, people have formed widely differing conclusions based on the evidence. Some have taken even scattered references to the practice to indicate widespread communion of infants and children throughout many chapters of the church's history; others have seen the absence of regular, widespread references to indicate that the practice was never well established in the West. No doubt, both proponents and opponents of communing infants and young children today will continue to find support for their positions in the historical data. There are two points that are important for us to keep in mind:

1. History alone cannot provide for us a decisive argument for or against paedocommunion. Though we treasure the traditions of our fathers, these traditions like everything else must come under the scrutiny of the sole norm of doctrine and practice among us: the sacred Scriptures.

⁴ Arthur C. Repp, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 56-57. Although it cannot be taken for granted that confirmation age was always identical with the age of first communion, Repp's work shows that the norm would have been for the two ages to be the same.

⁵ Repp, 125-126. Repp provides the following reference to Løhe's *Agenda für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses*: "Found also in the 2d (1859) and the 3d (1884) ed., but dropped in Iowa's 4th ed. (1919)." The original German of the concluding sentence reads: "Nicht das Alter, sondern die 1. Cor. 11:28. geforderte Prüfungsfähigkeit entscheide in allen Fällen."

⁶ C. F. W. Walther, *Pastoraltheologie*, 5th ed. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1906), 265. Interestingly, Walther cites Luke 2:41-42 in connection with this age guideline.

⁷ "Our First Synodical Constitution," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 16:1 (April 1943): 13-14.

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2. There is clearly no evidence that the communion of infants or very young children was part of the Lutheran reformers' practice. This second point, while not decisive for us, is by no means insignificant. In spite of Luther and the Lutheran reformers' confidence that a right reception of the Supper was being restored,⁸ and in spite of their knowledge of the practice of paedocommunion among many Christians in earlier centuries and among the Bohemians in their own time, and in spite of passages that, according to some, show Luther as sympathetic to the practice, Luther and the Lutheran reformers did *not* introduce this practice among their congregations.

Question 3: What guidance do the Scriptures give us as we consider this practice?

Our Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations has looked carefully at Paul's instructions concerning communion in 1 Corinthians 11. Looking at the proposed support for paedocommunion and then carefully examining Paul's words, the Commission concluded that infants are not capable of the kind of conscious reflection "on their readiness to receive the Lord's body and blood" that Paul's instructions require.⁹ Gregory Lockwood's discussion of 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 also provides helpful exegetical insight into Scripture's instructions concerning the proper reception of the sacrament.¹⁰

As is already apparent, central to the discussion is the understanding of the self-examination required by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:28. Contemporary exegesis has supported the view that, although children may at an early age be able to so examine themselves, infants and very young children have no way to demonstrate that they can complete the kind of self-examination required by the passage. It would, however, be wrong to limit the discussion to this one phrase because there are other significant issues raised by this passage, most notably, the idea of proclaiming the Lord's death that Paul mentions in verse 26. Notice how Paul connects the idea of proclamation with that of remembrance in verses 24 and 25. Anthony Thiselton explains that the combination here of remembering and proclaiming "witnesses to the participant's self-involving appropriation of the cross both for redemption and lifestyle as those who share

⁸ Cf., for example, the following passage from "The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord" in the *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony* (1528) in *Luther's Works, Volume 40: Church and Ministry II*, ed. J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, and H. T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 289: "Secondly, the people are to be taught that it is right to receive both bread and wine. For now the holy gospel (God be praised) has been restored and we have clear witness that both elements are to be offered and received. For Christ has so ordained, as the three evangelists point out, and St. Paul has so done in the early church, as we see in 1 Cor. 11:24f.]. No human being may alter such a divine ordinance. We dare not annul a man's last will, as St. Paul writes in Galatians (Gal. 3:15). Much less is God's own last testament to be changed."

⁹ Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Response to "Concerns of South Wisconsin District Circuits 18 and 19 Regarding Infant Communion"* (April 29, 1997), 13.

¹⁰ Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), see especially the excursus on pages 407-408. In his discussion of the passage, George Knight provides a careful outline of the surrounding context of these verses, providing valuable help in applying them to the question of paedocommunion. See George W. Knight III, "1 Corinthians 11:17-34: The Lord's Supper: Abuses, Words of Institution and Warnings and the Inferences and Deductions with respect to Paedocommunion," pages 75-95 in *Children and the Lord's Supper*, edited by Guy Waters and Ligon Duncan (Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2011).

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*Christ's death in order to share Christ's life.*¹¹ Although this remembering and proclamation certainly includes the action of eating and drinking, Paul's discussion of the lives of the Corinthians individually and together precludes limiting the proclamation of Christ's death to the meal itself. It is difficult to see how any of this discussion could be applied meaningfully to infants and very young children.

Question 4: But don't Luther and the Confessions teach that faith is the only requirement for worthy reception of the sacrament?

This has indeed been one of the most vigorously asserted points in the discussion among Lutherans. Previous treatments of the material in Luther's writings and in the Confessions need not be repeated here. In the Commission's 1997 response to South Wisconsin District Circuits 18 and 19, a distinction was made between "being worthy to receive the sacrament and a *worthy use* of the sacrament."¹² This statement notes an important distinction. Certainly Paul was writing to baptized believers when he wrote the words of 1 Corinthians that we considered above. Otherwise, would he not have excluded them from future participation until they had become such? And yet, he is clearly denouncing the reception of the sacrament by some members of the baptized and believing community as improper (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:29-30).

How, then, you may wonder, can the Commission's own previous statement about admission to the Lord's Supper speak about faith as the necessary and *sufficient* qualification for worthy reception of the sacrament?¹³ That does appear, at first glance, to be inconsistent.

There is a passage from Luther that is very instructive on this point, and it is perhaps even more pertinent because it has been cited in support of communing infants:

Now anyone who thinks he has this kind of hunger should see to it that he does not deceive himself. He should make sure that it is no mere desire of the human flesh that prompts him. He should examine his faith and determine whether it is genuine, as St. Paul admonishes in 1 Cor. 11[:28]: "Let a man examine himself." This examination, however, covers your whole life. You must find within yourself a smiting conscience which is weighed down with a sense of sin and longs for the grace of God, a conscience that stands in dread of death or hell and longs for strength, a conscience that seeks and takes the sacrament, firmly relying on Christ's word, in order to receive such grace and strength and help. For as I have said, this sacrament requires a hungry, thirsty, oppressed, and anxious soul, that comes of its own accord, conscious of its own need and thirst, with utter confidence, and without regard to the pope's laws or lawlessness. That is the proof of faith; it is an inward matter.¹⁴

¹¹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 887.

¹² Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Response*, 10.

¹³ Cf. CTCR, *Admission to the Lord's Supper: Basics of Biblical and Confessional Teaching* (November 1999), 32.

¹⁴ Martin Luther, "Receiving Both Kinds in the Sacrament (1522)" *Luther's Works, Volume 36: Word and Sacrament II*, ed. J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, and H. T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 263-264.

Here, too, Luther speaks of the faith necessary for a right and beneficial reception of the sacrament, but notice the way in which he describes this faith. In this fuller description of faith, Luther shows us that Paul is adding no "second requirement" when he requires *believers* to examine themselves. When this faith is not properly considered or defined, an unworthy use of the sacrament, harmful to both the recipient and the community, may result. It is already difficult to see how Luther's words could be used to describe an infant or small child, even a baptized one, and Luther himself could not discern this kind of faith in infants. The reasoning that, since baptized infants have faith, they must be admitted to the Lord's Supper is even further challenged by the point Luther makes immediately before the statement just quoted:

Therefore, I ask again that all Christians take my advice concerning the sacrament and all other things. First, since Satan through the ordinance of the pope has thrown the sacrament before swine [Matt. 7:6] by compelling everybody to partake of the sacrament at Easter, whether they believe or not, whether they love or not, and since he has also concealed from them the words of the sacrament, on which faith must depend and nourish itself, let us therefore labor first to raise the sacrament above the level of the swine. We do this, however, only as we dissuade and keep the people from it by teaching and exhortation, so that no one goes to the sacrament out of compulsion by, or obedience to, the pope's ordinance. For the sacrament does not admit of people being compelled or driven to it. Rather, instructed by the gospel, people should request and insist upon it of their own accord, because they are driven by the hunger of their believing hearts.¹⁵

For the sake of the recipients and their protection from a wrong reception of the Lord's Supper, Luther prohibits all compulsion or obedience to human authority. People must come of their own accord, driven by their own hunger, requesting and insisting upon this sacrament.

Luther does not find his statement that faith is the proper preparation for the sacrament at all inconsistent with his principle that this faith involves knowing and understanding certain things. As he writes in the *Large Catechism*:

¹⁵ As we treated Holy Baptism under three headings, so we must deal with the second sacrament in the same way, stating what it is, what its benefits are, and who is to receive it. All these are established from the words by which Christ instituted it. ¹⁶ So everyone who wishes to be a Christian and go to the sacrament should be familiar with them. For we do not intend to admit to the sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come.

Question 5: Are we denying the weakest and most vulnerable children of God the gift of His grace by not communing them?

John Pless has answered this question in a very simple and straightforward way in his "Theses on Infant/Toddler Communion":

¹⁵ Martin Luther, "Receiving Both Kinds," 263.

¹⁶ LC, Fifth Part, 1-2; Tappert 447.

4. Arguments for infant/toddler communion bypass the truth that in Baptism, we receive "victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts" (LC IV:41-42, Kolb/Wengert, 461) as though the promise of Baptism remained unfulfilled without the Lord's Supper. By waiting until children have been instructed, examined, and absolved before admitting them to the Lord's Supper, they are not being deprived of Christ.

In the New Testament and the Lutheran Confessions, Baptism is not an event in a series of "rites of initiation" that is left incomplete without participation in the sacrament [of the altar]. Instead Baptism bestows the "entire Christ" and encompasses the whole life of the believer. Not only is it foundational, but it is also enduring in the life of [the] Christian. The teaching that our Lord attaches to Baptism (see Matt. 28:16-20) surely leads the baptized to eat and drink his body and blood as the Lord bestows his gifts in more than one way, but infants and young children are not deprived of Christ before this teaching has been accomplished.

Pless continues:

Maxwell E. Johnson, himself an advocate of infant communion, notes that through a coupling of John 3:5 (unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom) and John 6:53 (Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man) into a single *logion* in the *praditio fidei*, both Baptism and the Lord's Supper are made necessary for membership in the Christian community.¹⁷ [In contrast], the Lutheran Confessions do not operate with what might be called a "unitive" understanding of the sacraments. Baptism is the rebirth into the body of Christ as in it sins are forgiven and the Holy Spirit bestowed. The Lord's Supper is not an additive to Baptism but serves instead to strengthen the Christian in the forgiveness of sins according to the word and promise of Christ to which faith clings.¹⁸

Todd Nichol raises an additional and serious question in response to those who feel that not admitting infants to the supper is "denying them" or "leaving them out":

When the question of communing infants arises, it is frequently referred not to the norms of the church, but to the realm of sentiment. Rhetorical inquiries like "Can we leave the children out?" and "Can we deny them food when they reach for it?" are questions regularly assumed to be arguments. It has only rarely been asked:

¹⁷ Maxwell Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 68-69.

¹⁸ John T. Pless, "Theses on Infant/Toddler Communion" (Blogia. The Blog of Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology, October 31, 2013), bolded section in original. An example of a "unitive" view, and one that highlights the contrast with the Lutheran understanding of Baptism, is the statement of the Orthodox view by Thomas Hopko: "But to baptize anyone, according to the Orthodox understanding, without Chrismation and Holy Communion following immediately is like being born without living." Cf. Thomas Hopko, "Children and Holy Communion," *Lutheran Forum* 30:4 (1996): 33.

"Can we expose them to the possibility not only of blessings so great, but of judgment so severe?"¹⁹

Question 6: How do we best exercise our stewardship of this great treasure that our Lord has entrusted to us?

We have been unable to find any reason to commune our infants and very young children. No exegetical, systematic, confessional, historical, or pastoral argument was found to either require or encourage such a practice among us. The understanding of the Lord's Supper—its nature and its benefits—that we have derived from our study has confirmed the reformers' practice of continuing to require the sort of careful self-examination required by Saint Paul and, more importantly, by the Lord who spoke through Saint Paul and whose Supper this is. For the sake of those being examined, careful, thorough, and life-long instruction was to be provided. The insistence seen on the part of the reformers and of our synodical fathers that such examination conclude with confession and absolution is perfectly in line with the Apostolic and Dominical instructions concerning the worthy and beneficial reception of the sacrament. The pattern for baptized children in Lutheran congregations has been clear and consistent until very recently: instruction was followed by examination leading to confession, absolution, and the reception of the Lord's body and blood. As more and more groups promote the Eucharist for all the baptized or simply the Eucharist for all, it becomes all the more important that we remain faithful stewards in our own generation of the mysteries entrusted to us. At the same time, ongoing study of our understanding of the sacrament and of the resulting understanding of its worthy reception can only be beneficial, provided it is carried out under the supervision of the supreme norm of our thought and practice, the Holy Scriptures, and informed by their faithful and true exposition, the Lutheran Confessions.

Adopted September 13, 2014
Commission on Theology and Church Relations
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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GUIDELINES FOR CONGREGATIONAL, DISTRICT, AND SYNODICAL COMMUNION STATEMENTS

The President of the Synod requested the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to prepare guidelines for Communion statements for congregational, district, and synodical use. The request came to the CTCR after the president made numerous visits to District Conventions and congregations and witnessed a wide variety (and no small disparity) in statements addressing admission to the Lord's Supper.

The challenge of a godly, biblical Communion practice is great. Francis Pieper noted two potential errors of practice: "On the one hand they [churches and pastors] are not permitted to introduce 'Open Communion'; on the other hand, they must guard against denying the Sacrament to those Christians for whom Christ has appointed it."¹ "Open Communion," the admission of individuals to the Sacrament with minimal or no concern for Baptism, repentance, faith, self-examination, or unity of confession, is intolerable for any who take seriously that our Lord gave the Supper only to his disciples (Matt 26:20). Paul's plea that a church be of one mind or judgment and without division (1 Cor 1:10), and his insistence on self-examination and discerning the Lord's body (1 Cor 11:27-28). Just as intolerable is any approach to the Lord's Table which discourages repentant, confessing Christians from receiving the gifts of Christ or implies that only a select few Lutheran Christians are worthy and well-prepared to commune, as if reception is a reward for doctrinal orthodoxy or denominational affiliation. Recognizing such opposing errors, however, does not in itself resolve the practical, pastoral questions about how to administer Christ's Holy Supper faithfully or to communicate to both members and visitors biblical truths and concerns about proper, God-pleasing participation in the Lord's Supper.

The CTCR first issued guidelines for Communion statements in 1993. In the CTCR's letter to pastors dated February 22, 1993, the CTCR provided a "Model Communion Statement" consistent with its 1983 report, *Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper*, and with 1986 Resolution 3-08 "To Maintain Practice of Close Communion." The letter accompanying the "Model Communion Statement" of 1993 stated, "The Commission hopes that you will find it helpful as you evaluate and/or develop your own announcements concerning admission to Holy Communion." This 1993 statement was officially "recommended to the member congregations of the Synod for guidance" by the Synod in convention 1995 Res. 3-08 "To Reaffirm the Practice of Close[d] Communion." We may also mention the CTCR 1999 report *Admission to the Lord's Supper: Basics of Biblical and Confessional Teaching*.² Such documents and resolutions reflect the underlying respect for and concern with a theology and practice that is part of the long historic tradition of the church.³

The 1993 CTCR "Model Communion Statement" was intended to serve as an aid to congregations and pastors "as you evaluate and/or develop *your own announcements*" (emphasis added). Thus, although it has been used "as is" by some LCMS pastors and congregations, the model statement was certainly not intended to be considered either a final word on Communion statements for the LCMS or a perfect statement. However, it may continue to serve as a widely acceptable starting point in the development of guidelines for other additional Communion statements and for consideration of the matter of admission policies.

1

MODEL COMMUNION CARD STATEMENT

The Lord's Supper is celebrated at this congregation in the confession and glad confidence that, as he says, our Lord gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but his very body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with him and with one another. Our Lord invites to his table those who trust his words, repent of all sin, and set aside any refusal to forgive and love as he forgives and loves us, that they may show forth his death until he comes.

Because those who eat and drink our Lord's body and blood unworthily do so to their great harm and because Holy Communion is a confession of the faith which is confessed at this altar, any who are not yet instructed, in doubt, or who hold a confession differing from that of this congregation and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and yet desire to receive the sacrament, are asked first to speak with the pastor or an usher.

For further study, see Matthew 5:23f.; 10:32f.; 18:15-35; 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:17-34.

It may be helpful to identify the significant emphases of this statement. A couple of general observations are important before looking at specifics, however. First, we note that the purpose of the statement is to facilitate a right and blessed receiving of the Sacrament. It attempts to do so by providing an unmistakable confession of the nature of the Supper and, then, who does and does not receive the Supper's intended blessing. This means, second, that the model is by no means relevant only to the "visitor," but to all who would commune. Third, the passages listed at the conclusion are not exhaustive of scriptural teaching on the matter of the Supper and right reception.

In more specific terms, we note the three major components of the statement. It addresses the nature of the Supper, then reception of it by individuals, and also considers the Supper as a confession of faith by a church. Under the heading of individual reception, both a blessed and a harmful reception are recognized and delineated.

THEOLOGICAL COMPONENTS FOR LUTHERAN COMMUNION PRACTICE

1. The Nature of the Lord's Supper ("our Lord gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but his very body and blood to eat and to drink")
 - a. The Sacrament is Christ's body and blood, given orally together with bread and wine, for the forgiveness of sins.⁴
 - b. Christ's body and blood is intended to benefit the communicant and the church, but it may be received to the harm of both individual and church.

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2. The Sacrament's Benefit (or Harm) to Individuals ("for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with him and with one another")
 - a. Faith in Christ and his word is necessary for a blessed reception.
 - i. Faith in Christ and his word implies both baptism in the Triune Name and trust (faith) in Christ as Savior.⁵
 - ii. The communicant is then also called to believe Jesus' clear words that the Sacrament is his body and blood.⁶
 - iii. The repentant communicant has faith in the Lord's promise that in the Sacrament his or her sins are forgiven.⁷
 - iv. In trusting Christ's word, the believing communicant receives the promised forgiveness and is reaffirmed and strengthened in his or her union with Christ and other Christians.⁸
 - b. The source of harmful reception is unbelief or doubt in Christ's word.
 - i. The unbaptized and uninstructed person who does not yet know or believe in Christ and his promises is unprepared and should not commune.⁹
 - ii. The unrepentant person who does not seek Christ's forgiveness for sins—either general or particular—or refuses to forgive someone is unprepared and should not commune.¹⁰
 - iii. The doubting person who denies or is unconvinced of what Jesus says of his bodily presence in the sacrament or its promised forgiveness is unprepared and should not commune.¹¹

3. Communion, Communicant, and Church ("Holy Communion is a confession of the faith")
 - a. The church confesses its faith in Christ and the Gospel as it worships and as it communes.¹²
 - b. The person whose life is contrary to the teachings of the communing assembly introduces harmful division if he or she communes.¹³
 - c. The person whose confession of faith (his or her personal beliefs and/or the public confession made through his or her affiliation with a particular church body) is contrary to the communing assembly ("to the faith which is confessed at this altar") introduces the possibility of doubt, confusion, and potentially harmful division if he or she communes.¹⁴

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- d. As "the steward of the mysteries of God," the pastor is called by God through the congregation to ensure faithful administration of the Supper.

A final observation is in order about the Model Communion Statement. The statement is obviously intended to inform individuals who may wish to commune about the congregation's understanding of the Sacrament and to help them decide whether to come to receive it. As such, it fits fully into the scriptural admonition, "Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Co 11:28). This individual self-examination is paramount for right preparation and a blessed reception of the Sacrament. Such personal responsibility should not be misunderstood, however. There is also a responsibility for the congregation, acting especially through its pastor, in the matter of admission to the Supper. This responsibility flows especially out of love for the individual who might commune to his or her harm.¹⁵ For that reason the model urges that in any uncertainties about Communion, individuals should "speak with the pastor or an usher" (with the presumption that the latter would direct the person to the pastor) before partaking.

The preceding comments and the specific points identified within the components are intended to be of further help in the original goal of the Model Communion Statement, to aid in the evaluation and crafting of Communion announcements or statements.

SAMPLE STATEMENTS

In that regard, we are providing a sampling of Communion statements that are representative of some of those in use in the LCMS. Each statement is followed by brief comments in light of the preceding discussion.¹⁶

Statement 1

Admission to Holy Communion is by invitation of the Lord, presented through the Church to those who are baptized. Visitors who are baptized and who trust that Christ is truly present in this sacrament are welcome to join us at the Lord's Table.

Comments: This statement is welcoming, but unhelpfully brief. It says almost nothing about the nature of the Sacrament, without any reference to Christ's body and blood. It also fails to say anything of either the benefit of the Sacrament (forgiveness) or of the possibility of receiving the body and blood to one's judgment. Baptism is required as is trust in Christ's presence, but that presence is unclear. Where is Christ not present? Thus, faith in Christ or his words is only vaguely implied. This statement also fails to address the confessional aspect of the Supper.

Statement 2

If you have never communed at this altar, please introduce yourself to our pastor so that he may hear your faith before we share Communion with you. We follow the biblical and apostolic practice of closed Communion. This practice respects Communion as an expression of full unity in doctrine and practice of all who partake. It also assures that no one receives Communion to their condemnation. Only members in good standing of congregations of The Lutheran Church

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Missouri Synod (LCMS) which also practice closed Communion are welcome to receive Communion at this altar.

Comments: This statement takes to heart the importance of preventing harmful reception of the Sacrament. Its tone is one of stern warning addressed only to visitors with no guidance for members. No mention is made of the nature of the Sacrament as Christ's body and blood or of his promise of forgiveness or the opportunity of strengthening one's faith. Communion participation is seemingly based entirely on being a member of an LCMS congregation—and only some of them (those that practice closed Communion in the manner that this congregation practices it). Since no attention is given to repentant self-examination or to faith in Christ's words of promise, this statement may actually foster unworthy communing.

Statement 3

The Communion Confession

I believe that I am a sinner. I repent of my sin and ask God's forgiveness. With his help I will amend my sinful life. I believe that Jesus Christ is my only Lord and Savior from sin, Satan, and death. I believe that the risen Christ is really present in the Sacrament and, under the form of the bread and the wine, I receive his true body and blood for the forgiveness of my sin and the strengthening of my faith and life. I resolve to dedicate my life to the service of my Lord by regular group worship, sacrificial giving, thankful living, and sharing the Gospel with others.¹⁷

Comments: This statement invites thoughtful self-examination. It addresses the nature of the Sacrament and speaks of its benefit, the forgiveness of sins. While personal faith is emphasized, there is no mention of being baptized. Unaddressed as well is the matter of the Sacrament as confession of faith and thus, its churchly character and its intent toward unity. While thoroughly individual in nature, the statement also misses important individual needs. It leaves unanswered the questions or concerns of an individual with a troubled conscience too weak to make bold resolutions or fearful that he can give sacrificially enough, be thankful enough, or share the Gospel often enough. It may then keep such persons away from an acknowledged source of strengthened "faith and life." Similarly, the individual with uncertain beliefs or doubts is left without any guidance or invitation to seek the aid and counsel of a pastor. Lastly, individuals whose beliefs are inconsistent with or contrary to the congregation's confession in areas other than the Supper—Baptism, for instance—are left to assume that such differences pose no obstacle to the unity of the altar.

Statement 4

The Lord's Supper: God's Word teaches the real presence of Christ's body and blood invisibly in, with and under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins. We take seriously the spiritual care of those who commune at our altar. The Word of God states that no one offend against Christ and His Word by denying His true presence and its promise and seal of forgiveness. Because those who eat and drink our Lord's body and blood unworthily do so to their great harm (see 1 Cor. 11:27-29), and because Holy Communion is a confession of what is taught and believed at this altar (1 Cor. 11:26), any who are not yet instructed, in doubt, or who hold a

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confession (beliefs) differing from that of this congregation (that is, belong to another church body or denomination) and yet desire to receive the sacrament, will want to first speak with the pastor before communing. As a courtesy, guests from sister congregations of the LCMS or from congregations of the American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC) are also asked to introduce themselves to the pastor before communing.

Comments: This statement speaks about the nature of the Sacrament, its benefits, and its churchly character as a confession of faith by the assembly. While indicating the benefit of the Sacrament, it gives greatest attention to the potential that the Supper can be received to the harm of individuals. It asks all those who are visiting to speak with the pastor, identifying those who share the same beliefs as the congregation and urging pastoral counsel for the uninstructed, doubtful, or those with other beliefs. While referring to all "who commune at our altar," it does not directly address the importance of repentant faith for every communicant.

Statement 5¹⁸

A Christmas Communion Statement: The coming of Christ in the flesh at Bethlehem was a concrete outward act of God in humble means that was despised by the world. The flesh and blood coming of Christ in the sacrament is also a concrete outward act of God in humble means that can be despised. Rather than despise it, however, God would have us delight in it! With deep thankfulness for His gifts to us here we also express our deep desire to celebrate it according to God's Will. As this includes oneness in the faith we confess (doctrine), guests who desire to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

Comments: This seasonal announcement addresses the nature of the Supper with a beautiful link between the Incarnation and the Sacrament. The statement is helpful for members and guests alike. Little further teaching about the Lord's Supper or its benefit is provided, but unity of confession is emphasized together with the need for guests to speak to the pastor before communing.

Statement 6

An Easter Communion Statement: In the Lord's Supper, the Risen Christ is at once the Giver and the Gift! By His promise His very body and blood are really present; and thereby we come into immediate contact with the exalted Christ! As we do so, witness is also given to oneness in doctrine by those who receive the Sacrament together. For this reason, we practice close(d) Communion and kindly ask guests to speak with the pastor before the service.

Comments: Once again a seasonal connection to the Sacrament is made that is helpful for all who read it. The presence of Christ's body and blood in the Supper is affirmed, but without specific mention of the benefit of forgiveness. Oneness in doctrine is emphasized and guests are again asked to speak to the pastor.

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CONCLUSION

The foregoing examples and comments are not provided to point fingers, chide, or be picaresque. The purpose is to illustrate how theological components underlying the CTCR's model statement can be used for evaluative purposes. Moreover, the Model Communion Statement itself is by no means perfect. It neglects to mention Baptism. Further, it could have clarified "who hold[s] a confession different from the congregation and LCMS by mentioning membership in a different church body. It could also clarify those "not yet instructed" as those who have not been confirmed or admitted to communion at their home congregations.

In addition, the Model Communion Statement is most directly pointed toward the visitor and is seemingly less helpful for the self-examination of member communicants. The CTCR recognizes that the focus of Communion statements tends overwhelmingly to be toward non-member guests or visitors. We acknowledge that this tendency is perfectly understandable, given the fact that there is so much variety among Christians and also within the LCMS on the question of who should be invited to commune. Nevertheless, the matter of admission to the Supper should not be so heavily focused on one particular problem (a problem that is by definition going to involve only a small number of visitors) that it may neglect the weightier reality that *all* who commune are called to be worthy and well-prepared.

It is the CTCR's hope that the guidelines provided here will help our pastors and congregations toward the goal of unity in our understanding of the Lord's Supper and in local practices that are in keeping with that teaching. This indeed would mean that Communion statements should be carefully considered and crafted in a way that is consistent with our theology. But the CTCR also emphasizes that as helpful as a well-crafted, doctrinally sound Communion statement may be, it cannot replace pastoral care. Indeed, perhaps the single most helpful "Communion message" for guests that is consistent with Lutheran teaching and practice is that they should speak with the pastor before communing. (Of course, this means that the pastor needs to find ways to make himself available for this important responsibility.) In that way the pastor can, on a personal level, exercise his responsibility as a steward of Christ's mysteries (1 Cor 4:1) to provide the sort of spiritual care implied by the confessional term, "examination." The pastor is called to care for the soul. In gentle, loving interaction with visitors who inquire about participation in the Supper, he can provide spiritual care to them. Yet, this care for souls is not for visitors alone. Ongoing teaching and preaching about the Sacrament—its nature, benefits, and confessing character—is far more important than any written announcement. Such proclamation is pastoral care for a church's members and will not only help them rightly to commune, it will also help them to assist in spiritual care for others as they invite guests to worship, explain Lutheran convictions and beliefs to their visiting family members and friends, and encourage them to take Communion and confession to heart.

¹⁷ *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 381.

¹⁸ The report is available in hard copy from Concordia Publishing House or in electronic format at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=411>.

¹⁹ See Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, Norman E. Nagel, trans. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966).

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⁴ The term "real presence" has come into common use among Lutherans to describe what is distinctive about Lutheran teaching on the Lord's Supper. We should recognize, however, that while there is a Lutheran understanding of Christ's real presence—namely, his bodily sacramental presence in the bread and wine—other Christians also refer to the "real presence" of Christ in the Sacrament but mean something different. As an Anglican theologian quipped recently: "A spiritual presence is still a real presence." This document therefore avoids that term. See Albert B. Collver, "Real Presence: An Overview and History of the Term," *Concordia Journal* (2002): 142–159. "Everyone seems to affirm some kind of doctrine of the real presence. Luther taught the real presence. Calvin taught the real presence. The Reformed Church teaches the real presence. The Roman Catholic Church teaches the real presence. The Anglican Church teaches the real presence. The great accomplishment of the ecumenical discussions in the twentieth century was the recognition that, despite whatever has been the historical teaching of a particular confession of the Lord's Supper, everyone in fact confesses the real presence. This is made clear in the Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry (B.E.M.) document of 1982. All Christian churches that accept the B.E.M. document indeed confess the real presence. What then is the real presence? B.E.M. does not provide us with an answer, but simply assures us that everyone confesses the real presence. This assurance of the real presence suggests that there are no remaining obstacles (or at least no insurmountable obstacles) which hinder Eucharistic fellowship among the church bodies." (Collver 143.)

⁵ It should be noted that while the Model Communion Statement does not make explicit mention of Holy Baptism, our Lord's clear words that to be his disciple one is to be baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19) and his promise, "Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16) remind us that the Supper he gives is for those who through baptismal faith are his disciples.

⁶ Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:19-20; 1 Co 10:16; 11:23-25.

⁷ Note the sacrificial atonement emphasized in our Lord's words about the Supper as they are preserved by the various NT authors: Mt 26:28 "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"; Mk 14:24 "poured out for many"; Lk 22:19 "my body, which is given for you" and Lk 22:20 "This cup that is poured out for you"; 1 Co 11:24b "for you."

⁸ Here as always faith alone receives God's gracious promises (Rom 4:13-17; Gal 3:22).

⁹ Although the language sounds harsh to our ears, those who are not baptized and believing disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are idolaters, having some god other than the one true God. Paul's warning in 1 Co 10:14-22 then applies. See also Hb 13:10, the passages in endnote 3, and the discussion in endnote 10.

¹⁰ 1 Co 5:6-13. See also the discussion in endnote 11.

¹¹ 1 Co 11:27-32. Although this passage never says, in so many words, "you should not commune," the unavoidable implication of these verses is to call a halt to unworthy communing. Note that Paul is writing to fellow Christians ("brothers" 11:33) with deep pastoral concern, seeking to show them what is wrong and to correct them. They are under judgment and discipline (11:29-32). Yet, the purpose is not so much that they would not commune, but that they would commune worthily, examining and judging themselves (11:28, 30) "so that we may not be condemned along with the world" (11:32). Thus he distinguishes between judgment and condemnation: (v. 29) ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων **κατὰ** ἑαυτὸν ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα; (v. 32) κρινόμενοι δὲ ὑπὸ [τοῦ] κυρίου παύσεσθε, ἵνα μὴ σὺν τῷ κόσμῳ **κατακαθήμεθα**. Not irrelevant to Paul's warning is the one from Hebrews 10:28-31. There the writer warns of spurning the Son of God and profaning his blood. This risks the fearful reality of condemnation: "fall[ing] into the hands of the living God."

¹² 1 Co 11:26.

¹³ 1 Co 11:17-34. Jeffrey Gibbs shows that the "overt sin" in Corinth was moral in nature. Paul condemns those guilty of the overt sin of a loveless attitude toward others, turning the Supper into a gluttonous, drunken gathering while providing nothing for the poor who come later to the table. The underlying concern of Paul, however, is to address the primary issue—the problem that these Corinthians are not discerning the Supper's reality as Christ's bodily presence. See Gibbs, "The Body for the Body": 1 Cor 11:17-34 and Pastoral Practice in the Local

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Congregation" (unpublished paper presented at "Common Ground" Forum, Pacific Southwest District, Jan 14-15, 1997, p. 8). On file in the office of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations.

¹⁴ 1 Co 11:26. See also 1 Co 1:10; Eph 4:1-3; Phil 1:27. Doubt or confusion are significant dangers of failing to address the confessional aspect of the Supper. "For we do not intend to admit to the sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come" (LC VI.2). "However, a person who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, because the words 'for you' require truly believing hearts" (SC VI.9-10). See pages 32-38 and 41-46 of the CTCR's report *Admission to the Lord's Supper* for a more extensive discussion of "communion as confession."

¹⁵ The harm caused by unworthy eating of the body and blood of Christ described by Saint Paul includes, not only, judgment (κρίμα; v. 29) but also weakness (ἀσθενής; v. 30), illness (ἄρρωστος; v. 30), and, in some cases, death (κοιμήσονται; v. 30). One of the reasons partakers of the Lord's Supper are instructed first is so that they do not sin against the body and blood of Christ in ignorance and thereby receive judgment that may include weakness, illness, and death instead of "forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation" (see SC 5). Therefore, when a person does not recognize or denies that the body and blood of Christ is given in the Lord's Supper, the pastor as a "steward of the mysteries of God" has a responsibility to prevent the person from receiving the body and blood of Jesus to his judgment and harm.

¹⁶ Some of these statements were shared in whole or in part with CTCR staff members. Others appeared in various online discussions. Still others are from congregational visits. All have been modified to some extent in order to avoid the names of pastors or congregations, to correct grammar, and to remove extraneous matters (e.g., references to the manner of distribution, to the use of individual cups versus the chalice, to availability of low/no alcohol wine, and so forth).

¹⁷ This is an example of a very common statement which is often presented in the form of several questions. The questions ask for a Yes or No response and those who answer all the questions with a Yes are then welcomed to the Table.

¹⁸ Statements 5 and 6 are from a helpful booklet that provides both Communion announcements and artwork that is seasonal in nature, *Lord May Your Body and Your Blood Be For My Soul the Highest Good* by Rev. Kenneth Wieting (originally published in 1990, now available from Luther Memorial Chapel and University Center, 3833 N Maryland Ave., Shorewood, WI 53211).

*Adopted December 11, 2014
Commission on Theology and Church Relations
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*

CTCR Review of 2005 Task Force Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational OfficesExecutive Summary

The purpose of this document is to respond to President Harrison's Sept. 12, 2012 request to the CTCR to "review" 2004 Res. 3-08A "and particularly the January 2005 document *Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*," with reference to the following specific questions: female presidents/chairs of congregations and church councils; women leading worship; female elders; women assisting with Holy Communion, and women leading chapel at our universities.¹

The Commission first offers an excursus which seeks to provide further clarification regarding certain historical and contextual developments and issues related to the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A and the January 2005 document. The Commission then notes that the 2005 Task Force *Guidelines* are helpful (first of all) in that they serve to clarify what the Synod did—and did not do—in adopting Res. 3-08A at the 2004 convention. The Synod did not adopt, approve, or affirm the CTCR's 1994 report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* as such or in its entirety. Rather, it affirmed two specific conclusions based on this report which are summarized as follows in the second "Resolved" of Res. 3-08A: 1) "that women may not serve in the office of pastor nor exercise any of its distinctive functions," and 2) "that women may serve in humanly established offices in the church as long as the functions of these offices do not make them eligible to carry out" official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office."

The second of these conclusions (regarding women serving in humanly established offices) was further clarified and delimited by the 2005 *Guidelines*. In that respect, and in its summation, clarification, and affirmation of the Synod's position on several other questions related to the service of women in the church, the Commission finds the 2005 *Guidelines* to be very helpful. Especially helpful, in the Commission's view, are the following clarifications and affirmations:

- 2004 Res. 3-08A does not simply "permit women to hold all humanly established congregational and synodical offices." Rather, this resolution permits women to hold humanly established offices *only* "so long as these offices do not call upon the holders of these offices to 'perform those functions that are distinctive to the public exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacraments' or to carry out 'official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office.'"
- The term "elder" should 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.
- 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," should be limited to lay men (cf. 1989 Res. 3-10).
- Men are encouraged to continue to exercise leadership in their congregations, just as they are encouraged to exercise their God-given leadership in the home.
- As changes in practice resulting from the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A are considered and/or implemented, congregations should always act in a spirit of love, caution, and charity, respecting the consciences of others, and they should consult with neighboring LCMS congregations before implementing any changes.
- The consecrated service of women in biblically supported vocations and tasks is to be encouraged and upheld.

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The Commission also notes several deficiencies in the 2005 *Guidelines*, including especially the following:

- The historical background in the *Guidelines* document does not do sufficient justice to the division and disunity caused by the very narrow (52.5%) adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A, which had the effect of changing the longstanding position of the Synod on a significant and sensitive issue. Hence, the Commission strongly recommends reconsideration by the Synod (cf. 2010 Res. 8-23) of a proposal to revise the bylaws in a way that would require greater consensus when adopting doctrinal resolutions.
- The *Guidelines* (like 2004 Res. 3-08A and the CTCR's 1994 report) do not directly or explicitly address the issue of the "order of creation" and its relevance for issues relating to the service of women in the church. This was and is a major concern of those who have expressed dissent from 2004 Res. 3-08A, and needs continued careful study and attention (a task to which the CTCR has explicitly committed itself).
- The *Guidelines* do not sufficiently address the real-life dilemma of those who may (and/or do) have conscience-bound concerns and disagreements with the action of the Synod in 2004 Res. 3-08A. Here the Commission points by way of illustration and parallel to 1995 Res. 3-05 and the helpful and fraternal way that it addresses "concerns regarding women suffrage" by acknowledging that "honest Christian conscience can and does exist on both sides of this issue" and that "members of the Synod, with due sensitivity to those for whom change in this area is a matter of conscience, continue to exercise Christian love and patience in all discussion and deliberations on this subject."

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Commission on Theology and Church Relations
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¹ The question of women leading chapel services is not specifically addressed in 2004 Res. 3-08A or the January 2005 document, but it was addressed in a 1993 opinion of the CTCR which is included with and re-affirmed by the Commission in its response to President Harrison (see below). This opinion observes that the general model for chapel services at our colleges and universities "is very similar to worship in a congregation," and therefore the principle that "women should not preach or lead [such] services of worship" applies to these chapel services.

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CTCR Review of 2005 Task Force Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational OfficesIntroduction: Request of the Synod President

In a letter dated September 12, 2012 President Matthew Harrison presented the following request to the CTCR:

We have noted that recent district conventions have passed overtures calling for the rescinding of Res. 3-08A (2004), "To Affirm the Conclusions of the 1994 CTCR Report: The Service of Women in Congregational Offices." I request that the CTCR please review this resolution, as well as 3-07 (2007) and particularly the January 2005 document "Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices," in light of *The Creator's Tapestry* and other relevant Synod or CTCR action—all to provide clarity and direction on the issue of women's service in the church. The questions that arise most consistently are the issues of: female presidents/chairs of congregations and church councils; women leading worship; female elders; and women assisting with Holy Communion. The question of women leading chapel at our universities is also a persistent area of concern. Please address these questions, while affirming and upholding the consecrated service of women in biblically supported vocations and tasks. I find the January 24, 2005 "Memo" very helpful. The commission may simply want to affirm the "Memo," with some or little alteration, and present it to the Synod.¹

We begin with a few observations and comments about the President's request (and most specifically about the "January 24, 2005 'Memo'" referenced at the end of his request) for purposes of clarification.

First, the "January 24, 2005 'Memo'" referenced by the President consists of two items: 1) a cover memo from Dr. Samuel Nafzger (Executive Director of the CTCR at that time) to the Council of Presidents (COP), written for the purpose of sharing with the COP a newly prepared Task Force document called *Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*; 2) a copy of the *Guidelines* document itself, which is attached to the cover memo (see attached, Appendix A). (The *Guidelines* document was on the agenda for discussion by the COP at its February 2005 meeting.) Dr. Nafzger's cover memo is essentially informational, written for the purpose of introducing and conveying the attached *Guidelines* to the COP. Therefore, when President Harrison suggests that "the commission may simply want to affirm the 'Memo,' with some or little alteration, and present it to the Synod," the CTCR understands his reference to "the 'Memo'" to include the attached *Guidelines* document. There is nothing of substance to "affirm" in Dr. Nafzger's cover memo itself, if read apart from the document attached to it and conveyed by it.

¹ The response to this request that follows in this document focuses on the 2005 *Guidelines* document, which touches on all the specific questions and concerns noted in President Harrison's request *except* the issue of "women leading chapel at our universities." This issue is helpfully addressed in a previous (1993) opinion of the CTCR which is appended to this document and which the Commission continues to affirm (Appendix F). This opinion observes that the general model for chapel services at our colleges and universities "is very similar to worship in a congregation," and therefore the principle that "women should not preach or lead [such] services of worship" applies to these chapel services.

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Second, the *Guidelines* document attached to this memo was later published in a larger (January 2005) document titled *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices With Guidelines for Congregations* [SWCSOGC] that also contained two CTCR documents (the CTCR's 1994 report on *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* and the CTCR's April 2004 *Opinion on The Service of Women in Congregational Offices of Executive Director/President or Assistant Director/Vice President*) as well as the text of 2004 Res. 3-08A. This has led some to believe that the *Guidelines* document was written or approved by the CTCR or even by the Synod in convention. This is not the case. The *Guidelines* document was presented to the Synod by a Task Force appointed by the President of the Synod following the 2004 convention in order "to provide assistance to the members of the Synod who wish to implement Res. 3-08A based on the officially adopted position of the Synod on the role of women in the church" (Jan. 24, 2005 cover memo). Neither the CTCR nor the Synod has acted on or officially approved the *Guidelines* document.

Third, the *Guidelines* document itself contains five distinct sections ("Background," "Scriptural and Confessional Basis," "Sample Paragraph for Congregational Constitutions," "Recommendations," and "A Concluding Word"), none of which are specifically titled "Guidelines." This has proven to be confusing to some readers in determining exactly what "guidance" is being offered here, and where and how the document seeks to offer such guidance in the various sections of the document. There is also a preface at the beginning of the document as a whole that offers some helpful (but necessarily limited and selective) historical and contextual background.

The CTCR is herewith responding to the September 12, 2012 request of the President, therefore, by offering a section-by-section review of the 2005 Task Force *Guidelines* document. The CTCR hopes that this review will be helpful in clarifying the background and purpose of the *Guidelines*, evaluating the guidance given in the various sections of this document, and identifying issues raised by the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A that may need further clarification, study, and discussion.²

First, however, the Commission offers the following excursus on certain significant historical and contextual issues referenced in the document's prefatory section (pages 3-4) which are essential for understanding the *Guidelines* document and this review of it.

Excursus: Historical and Contextual Developments and Issues

The information provided in the brief preface to the larger January 2005 document (pages 3-4) is very helpful for understanding the historical developments of the past 50 years or so within the LCMS that preceded the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A. These developments include the CTCR's 1968 report on woman suffrage, the Synod's adoption of 1969 Res. 2-17 "To Grant Woman Suffrage and Board Membership" (see attached, Appendix B), and the CCM's 1970 opinion (rendered "by human right rather than by divine right," in accordance with the province of the CCM) that women, even if voting members of the congregation, should not serve in the congregational offices of elder, chairman, or vice-chairman (see attached, Appendix C). This opinion of the CCM served as the official (albeit *de iure humano*) position of the Synod from 1970 until the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A.

The brief history provided in this preface does not, of course, tell "the whole story." It is true that "[t]he 2004 synodical convention adopted a resolution [3-08A] affirming the conclusions of the 1994 CTCR

² Page numbers in the *Guidelines* document referenced in this "Review" correspond to the published version of the *Guidelines* document referenced in the hyperlink above.

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report” (SWCSOGC, 4), which effectively changed the long-standing position of the Synod on the service of women in certain congregational offices. It is also true, however, that this resolution was adopted only after extended and impassioned debate, and then by a disconcertingly slim majority (52.5%, 576-520). Another motion was immediately passed at the 2004 convention (by a vote of 639-348) to allow delegates to record their negative votes. Many lined up to do so; the convention minutes (July 15, 2004) record the names of 210 delegates who registered their dissent in this way at the convention itself.

Dissent to this action of the Synod continued after the 2004 convention. In 2004 and 2005, a number of pastors, congregations, and circuits formally expressed their dissent from 2004 Res. 3-08A and submitted it to the CTRC in accordance with [2004] Bylaw 1.6.2. The CTRC responded to this (and other expressions of dissent) in its December 2006 document *CTRC Response to Expressions of Dissent (2004-2006)*.

More than a dozen overtures (including overtures from ten districts, several pastoral conferences and circuit forums, and various congregations) were submitted to the 2007 Synod convention asking that 2004 Res. 3-08A be “rescinded” and/or that the CTRC be asked to “re-study,” “re-consider,” or “critically review” the conclusions of its 1994 report. It should be noted that several other overtures (including overtures from two districts, one district board of directors, and various congregations) asked that the Synod “affirm” 2004 Res. 3-08A. Hence, 2007 Overture 3-78 “To Reconsider and Clarify Scripture Passages re Role of Women” (submitted by the Texas District) summarizes well the state of affairs in the Synod at this time: “Confusion continues regarding the proper roles and service of women in the church.” The 2007 convention responded by adopting (by a vote of 870-286) Res. 3-07 “To Study CTRC Reports Relating to the Service of Women in the Church,” which also encouraged awaiting release of the CTRC’s forthcoming report on the scriptural relationship of man and woman. That report, *The Creator’s Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church*, was released by the CTRC in December 2009. It was “commended for study” by the Synod in 2010 Res. 3-06.

At the 2010 Synod convention, much time and attention was devoted to responding to the ELCA’s 2009 Assembly decisions and actions regarding human sexuality, as well as to the sweeping Synod restructuring recommendations brought forward at that convention by the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance (BRTFSSG). Only one overture (3-28, from a district, circuit forum, and two congregations) expressed concern about 2004 Res. 3-08A, asking for “review” of the issue of “the role of women in the church.” At the 2013 convention, concerns about 2004 Res. 3-08A and the service of women were expressed in the form of several overtures submitted by districts, circuits, and congregations (4-16 through 4-21; 4-65—cf. the reference in President Harrison’s request to overtures passed by “recent district conventions”).

Although (as evidenced by President Harrison’s request) questions and concerns persist in the Synod about various aspects of the service of women in the church, it appears that at least some of the concerns expressed immediately after the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A have been addressed or allayed by subsequent reaffirmations and/or clarifications of the Synod’s position on the service of women such as those offered in the 2005 *Guidelines*, the CTRC’s 2006 report responding to expressions of dissent on this issue, and the CTRC’s 2009 report on *The Creator’s Tapestry*. To whatever extent that may be true, however, there is in the view of the CTRC an important lesson to be learned from the confusion and division caused by the narrow adoption of a Synod resolution (2004 Res. 3-08A) that had the effect of changing the long-standing position of the Synod on a significant and sensitive issue in the life of the church (the service of women in congregational offices).

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In fact, the confusion and division caused by the narrow adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A (and perhaps other narrowly adopted resolutions in recent years) was undoubtedly one of the factors that led to the 2010 BRTFSSG’s proposal at the 2010 convention to amend Synod Bylaw 1.6 by including the following provision (proposed as new Bylaw 1.6.3):

1.6.3. Doctrinal resolutions of special significance (such as those initiating, modifying, or repealing specific positions or practices of the Synod) may be adopted for the information, counsel, and guidance of the membership.

(a) They shall conform to the confessional basis of the Synod as set forth in Article II of its Constitution and shall ordinarily cite the pertinent passages of the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and any previously adopted official statements and resolutions of the Synod.

(b) Such resolutions require a two-thirds vote for adoption. The floor committee shall determine which resolutions fall into this category. The convention may override such determination by a two-thirds vote. The convention may also, by simple majority vote, refer the matter to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations for evaluation, refinement, development, recommendation to the next convention of the Synod.

(c) All adopted doctrinal resolutions are to be honored and upheld by the members of the Synod in accordance with each resolution’s intended status until such time as the Synod amends or repeals them. (2010 *Today’s Business*, 179)

This proposal, submitted via 2010 Res. 8-23, died (like many other 2010 restructuring proposals) due to a lack of time and perceived priority. The Commission believes, however, that some revision of the bylaws along these lines—“raising the bar” for the adoption of doctrinal resolutions that would have the effect of changing or repealing the current position of the Synod—is well worth revisiting and reconsidering.

Section-by-Section Review of and Commentary on the 2005 *Guidelines*

“Background” (page 19)

The CTRC finds the “Background” section of the *Guidelines* to be helpful in the following ways:

- This section helps to clarify what the Synod did—and did not do—in adopting Res. 3-08A at the 2004 convention. The Synod did not adopt, approve, or affirm the CTRC’s 1994 report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* as such or in its entirety. Rather, it affirmed two specific conclusions “based on” this report which are summarized as follows in the second “Resolved” of Res. 3-08A: 1) “that women may not serve in the office of pastor nor exercise any of its distinctive functions,” and 2) “that women may serve in humanly established offices in the church as long as the functions of these offices do not make them eligible to carry out “official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office.”
- This section makes it clear, further, that 2004 Res. 3-08A does *not* simply “permit women to hold all humanly established congregational and synodical offices” (as many formal and informal

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dissenters to this resolution have argued). Rather, this resolution permits women to hold such humanly established offices *only* “so long as these offices do not call upon the holders of these offices to ‘perform those functions that are distinctive to the public exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacraments’ or to carry out ‘official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office.’” (Further comments on these restrictions follow below.)

- This section also clarifies the specific nature of the “guidelines” requested by the Synod President following the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A. The President specifically requested “guidelines for congregations and District constitutional committees to follow in *revising congregational constitutions and bylaws*” (emphasis added) in a way that conformed to the position and polity of the Synod. (Hence, two of the representatives on the five-person Task Force appointed to prepare these guidelines were members of the CCM, and one of these CCM members was the Secretary of the Synod.) Even though none of the subsequent sections of the *Guidelines* is specifically titled “Guidelines,” therefore, it is clear from the President’s request that the portion of the *Guidelines* that addresses the President’s request most specifically and directly is the “Sample Paragraph for Congregational Constitutions” (page 21; see comments on this section below).
- This section also makes it clear that the “guidelines and recommendations” offered in the document are intended to “*summarize* the actions and statements previously adopted by the Synod which present its understanding of what the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach about the service of women in the church” (emphasis added). In other words, it is not the purpose of the *Guidelines* to “break new ground” or suggest some further modification of the Synod’s position. Their purpose is to *summarize* the position of the Synod and to offer guidance to “congregations and District constitutional committees” for applying and implementing it in specific situations as needed and desired.

“Scriptural and Confessional Basis” (page 20)

The CTRC regards the five principles presented in this section of the document to be an accurate summary of what the Synod has said in past statements and resolutions about the service of women in the church. It is aware that some members of the Synod continue to have questions and concerns about whether 2004 Res. 3-08A and the conclusions of the CTRC’s report on *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* are consistent with the Scriptural and Confessional principles set forth in this section. It is also aware that some members of the Synod may not agree fully with some of the previously adopted resolutions of the Synod summarized in these principles—e.g., resolutions that “permit women to vote in congregational assemblies (without any limitations on matters on which they may vote)” and/or resolutions that permit women “to read the Scriptures in public worship services” (cf. 1969 Res. 2-17 and 1989 Res. 3-14). For these very reasons, however, the CTRC commends these principles to the Synod as a helpful basis and starting point for continuing discussion of these questions and concerns about the service of women in the church.

Regarding the issue of women reading the Scriptures in the context of public worship, it should be noted that (as 1989 Res. 3-14 itself acknowledges) the CTRC, in its 1985 report on *Women in the Church* (which has been repeatedly commended by the Synod for study and guidance), stated: “[I]t is the opinion of the CTRC that 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” (p. 45). The CTRC, of

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course, does not determine the official position of the Synod. This is done by the Synod in convention. 1989 Res. 3-14, while referencing this 1985 opinion of the CTRC, proceeds to state: “Resolved, That the 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.”

Finally, the CTRC notes what has been regarded by some (and understandably so) as a significant omission or deficiency in this section of the *Guidelines* document, reflecting a similar omission or deficiency in the CTRC’s 1994 report which served as the basis for the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A. One concern of many dissenters from 2004 Res. 3-08A is that it contains no explicit reference to or argumentation concerning the foundational theological principle of “the order of creation.” The CTRC responded to this concern in its December 2006 report *CTRC Response to Expressions of Dissent (2004-2006)* by stating, in summary:

The CTRC agrees with the dissenters that 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. Contrary to the claim of some of the dissenters, the order of creation argument has not been ignored by the Synod or by the CTRC. In fact, all of the recent CTRC documents on women’s service in the church (1985, 1994, 2005) take into account what Scripture teaches about the order of creation in their argumentation. (28)

It is true, however, that argumentation regarding “the order of creation” is not made *explicit* in the CTRC’s 1994 report (or in 2004 Res. 3-08A), which was clearly a cause for concern on the part of many who dissented from 2004 Res. 3-08A. It is also true that the 1994 report does not explicitly address the question of the various implications of the order of creation for *humanly* instituted offices in the church. However, subsequent CTRC documents (e.g., the CTRC’s 2004 Opinion included as “Appendix B” in the January 2005 document, and the CTRC’s 2009 report *The Creator’s Tapestry*) do attempt to address certain aspects of this issue. The latter document also states that “the Commission intends to continue the work begun here by providing additional resources to address specific areas of concern,” including “the understanding and value of such ideas as ‘the order of creation’ and ‘headship’” (4).

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. Hence the need for continued careful study and discussion of this matter (and patience, charity, and restraint where there is disagreement about these very difficult questions of application), to which the Commission itself is strongly committed as is indicated above.

“Sample Paragraph for Congregational Constitutions” (page 21)

The CTRC appreciates the clarity with which the “sample paragraph” provided in this section of the document (for use in preparing or revising congregational constitutions) affirms the historic position of the Synod by stating that (1) “a woman shall not serve as pastor of this congregation” and that (2) a woman may *not* hold any office that calls upon her “to carry out the specific functions of the pastoral

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office (preaching in or serving as the leader of the public worship service, the public administration of the sacraments, the public exercise of church discipline)."

The CTCR also appreciates the reminder in this section that this sample paragraph is intended for use only by congregations "that wish to permit women to hold all congregational offices that are not directly involved in carrying out specific functions of the pastoral office or in public accountability for the functioning of this office." As with the Synod position on woman suffrage (1969 Res. 2-17), no congregation in the Synod is "forced" by 2004 Res. 3-08A (or by any other resolution of the Synod) to permit women to hold any particular congregational office. Congregations of the Synod retain the freedom to decide which congregational offices they wish to limit to their male voting members.

In addressing "Concerns Regarding Woman Suffrage" in 1995 Res. 3-05 (see attached, Appendix D), the Synod officially declared "that honest Christian conscience can and does exist on both sides of this issue, but such difference of opinion is not divisive of Christian fellowship." The same is true, the CTCR believes, with regard to 2004 Res. 3-08A and the matter of women serving in humanly-established congregational offices "that are not directly involved in carrying out the specific functions of the pastoral office or in public accountability for the functioning of this office." Therefore, the CTCR also affirms in this context the Synod's appeal in 1995 Res. 3-05 "that the members of the Synod, with due sensitivity to those for whom change in this area is a matter of conscience, continue to exercise Christian love and patience in all discussion and deliberations on this subject."

Finally, the CTCR notes that there is a certain ambiguity (seemingly an intentional ambiguity) in the language used in this section (and in 2004 Res. 3-08A itself) which speaks of congregational offices "that are not directly involved in carrying out specific functions of the pastoral office or in public accountability for the functioning of this office" (emphasis added; cf. 2004 Res. 3-08A, "official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office"). The Synod has not provided an official "list" of congregational offices that do or do not inherently or necessarily involve "public accountability for the functioning of the pastoral office." Since congregations are granted considerable freedom by the Synod to determine which congregational offices they wish to include or not include as part of their polity and how they wish to delimit or delineate the functions of those who hold these offices, it would be virtually impossible for the Synod (within the framework of its own official polity) to create such a "list." (See the "Recommendations" section below, however, with regard to the office of "elder.")

This means, of course, that some congregations of the Synod may "define" certain offices and their accompanying responsibilities (e.g., president, vice-president, etc.) differently than others, which may well result in different conclusions about the possibility of women holding these offices.³ Even when congregations define the same office in virtually identical ways, they may well have different understandings of whether or not the functions of this office "involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office" (e.g., to what extent is the President of a congregation "publicly accountable for the function of the pastoral office?"). This certainly involves an "inconsistency" in congregational polity, and (potentially) in practice. The critical question is whether it also involves an inconsistency in doctrine that is (at least potentially) "divisive of fellowship." Here again, the CTCR believes that the parallel to the Synod's position and practice on the issue of woman suffrage is valid

³ The issue of the "order of creation," discussed in the previous section, often plays a significant role when it comes to different understandings and definitions in this regard—another reason that continuing discussion and clarification of this issue is needed.

and applicable—together with the affirmation of the Synod in 1995 Res. 3-05 that such differences of opinion and practice are "not divisive of Christian fellowship" but rather call for the "exercise of Christian love and patience" (cf. the comments below on the section titled "A Concluding Word").

"Recommendations" (pages 21-22)

The CTCR affirms the recommendation given here regarding the congregational office of "elder," the recommendation regarding lay assistance in the distribution of the elements in the celebration of Holy Communion, and the encouragement to men to exercise leadership in their congregations in a way that parallels God-pleasing leadership of men in the home. These recommendations are consistent with the Scriptural and Confessional principles summarized earlier in the document, previously adopted resolutions of the Synod, and past reports and opinions of the CTCR. (In connection with the encouragement to men to exercise leadership in church and home, the CTCR calls attention to its 2004 opinion which is included as Appendix B in the 2005 *Guidelines* document, and especially the sections in that opinion on "Edifying Decisions in Matters of Adiaaphora" and "Supporting the God-Given Family Structure.") Congregations and districts of the Synod are urged to abide by these recommendations out of Christian love and charity and for the sake of our walking together in the Synod.

"A Concluding Word" (pages 22-23)

Finally, the CTCR strongly commends to the Synod the concluding section of the 2005 document with its emphasis on respecting "the consciences of others," acting in a spirit of love and charity, avoiding the giving of unnecessary offense, consulting with neighboring LCMS congregations before changes in practice are implemented, and not limiting study and discussion of the Biblical (and blessing-filled!) relationship between man and woman to casuistic questions about the "eligibility" of women to carry out certain "functions" within the official congregational structures of the church. In this connection, the CTCR encourages continuing study and discussion of its more "full-bodied" treatment of the relationship of man and woman in *The Creator's Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church* (cf. the reference to this document in President Harrison's request), with its reminder that "the Commission intends to continue the work done here by providing additional resources to address specific areas of concern under the general topic of 'Man and Woman in the Contemporary World'" (4).

The CTCR also joins President Harrison in "affirming and upholding the consecrated service of women in biblically supported vocations and tasks." Many Synod resolutions and CTCR documents, such as the following, have done the same (also note the ongoing work in this area given to the CTCR in 2013 Res. 4-11A, attached as Appendix E):

The Commission...recommends that congregations encourage all of their members (male and female, single or married) to exercise their God-given responsibilities of service and leadership in their congregations. (April 21, 2004 CTCR opinion on "The Service of Women," January 2005 document; page 30)

The body of Christ requires that its individual members exercise the wide variety of their gifts, whether that individual is male or female (1 Cor. 12:7). Therefore our church has affirmed the calling of women teachers, deaconesses, professors, and missionaries. We have endorsed such organizations as the Lutheran Women's Missionary League and the Women's Leadership Institute. We have affirmed the freedom of organizations to grant

women's suffrage and have opened to women various lay leadership positions in congregations, districts, and Synod. We have recognized the leadership of women in business, government, the professions, and other sectors of society.

Such leadership of women is not inconsistent with Scriptural teaching. On the contrary, it exists in the very context of our church's life and teaching which upholds and promulgates the divinely-ordered responsibility of pastors and husbands. When women serve in this way they are enhancing the work of the priesthood of all believers, serving as members of the body of Christ, and not usurping pastoral authority or violating "the order of creation." (*The Creator's Tapestry*, CTCR, 2009; page 45)

Adopted December 11, 2014
Commission on Theology and Church Relations
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Commission on Theology
& Church Relations
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Memo

To: All Members of Council of Presidents
From: Samuel H. Nafziger, Chairman of Task Force on 2004 Res. 3-08A
Date: January 24, 2005
Re: *Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*

The CTCR has been informed that a copy of materials relating to the service of women in congregational offices will be ready to send to every synodical congregation and rostered church worker today. Included in this booklet are the following four items:

1. The CTCR's 1994 Report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*;
2. The Task Force's *Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*;
3. 2004 Res. 3-08A;
4. The CTCR's April 2004 Opinion on *The Service of Women in Congregational Offices of Executive Director/President or Assistant Director/Vice President*.

The Task Force is looking forward to discussing its Guidelines with you at the February meeting of the COP. Should questions be directed to you prior to this time regarding these Guidelines, we would encourage you to note that the Task Force understood that its assignment was to provide assistance to the members of the Synod who wish to implement Res. 3-08A based on the officially adopted position of the Synod on the role of women in the church. Its assignment was not to re-study this issue. These Guidelines, therefore, do not "break new ground."

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact any of the members of the Task Force, if you have any questions prior to our February time together.

Blessings in Christ.

Raymond Hartwig - raymond.hartwig@lcms.org
Loren Kramer - lmkram@aol.com
Arleigh Lutz - alljnw@aol.com
Albert Marcis - marcis1928@tuno.com
Samuel Nafziger - samuel.nafziger@lcms.org

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Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices

Background

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, at its 62nd Regular Convention (July 1-15, 2004) adopted a resolution which affirms its understanding that the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions permit women to hold all humanly established congregational and synodical offices, so long as these offices do not call upon the holders of these offices to “perform those functions that are distinctive to the public exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacraments” or to carry out “official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office.”¹ This decision was based on a report issued by the Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) in 1994 and which the Synod had commended for study throughout the Synod at its 1995 convention.²

Following the 2004 convention, President Gerald Kieschnick appointed a task force made up of two representatives from the CTCR, two representatives from the Commission on Constitutional Matters, and one District President to prepare “guidelines for congregations and District constitutional committees to follow in revising congregational constitutions and bylaws to permit women to hold all congregational offices so long as their assigned responsibilities do not include distinctive functions of the pastoral office.”

In response to this assignment the task force offers the following guidelines and recommendations which summarize the actions and statements previously adopted by the Synod which present its understanding of what the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach about the service of women in the church.

Scriptural and Confessional Basis

The conclusions of the CTCR’s report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*, affirmed by the Synod, are based on the following principles presented in the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions:

1. The Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach that the office of the public ministry (pastoral office) is the only divinely established office in the church (Matt.

¹ 2004 Resolution 3-08A “To Affirm the Conclusions of the 1994 CTCR Report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*,” *Convention Proceedings*, 132-3.

² 1995 Resolution 3-06A “To Continue to Study *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* in Light of ‘Dissenting Report’ and Other Ongoing Studies by the CTCR on the Role of Women in the Church,” *Convention Proceedings*, 120.

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28:18-20; John 20:22-23; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1; Titus 1:5; AC XIV; Ap XIII; Treatise 67-72;³ see also 1969 Res. 2-17.)

2. The Holy Scriptures teach that women are not to hold the office of the public ministry (pastoral office) or to perform those functions (see 4 below) that are distinctive to the public exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacraments, nor are they to carry out official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the functions of the pastoral office (1 Corinthians 14; 1 Timothy 2).⁴
3. The Augsburg Confession states that “according to the Gospel the power of the keys or the power of bishops [pastors] is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments” (AC XXVIII, 5; cf. 8-9, 21 etc.).⁵
4. Neither the Scriptures nor the Lutheran Confessions provide a detailed list of the activities required of pastors in the congregations they “are called to serve.” Intrinsic to this office, however, are the following functions: “1) preaching in the services of the congregation; 2) leading the formal public services of worship; 3) the public administration of the sacraments; and 4) the public administration of the office of the keys.”⁶
5. The Synod, based on its understanding of what the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach, has adopted resolutions which permit women to vote in congregational assemblies (without any limitations on the matters on which they may vote) and to read the Scriptures in public worship services, thereby indicating that these activities are not distinctive functions of the pastoral office nor do they constitute “official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office” (see 1969 Res. 2-17; 1989 Res. 3-14).

Sample Paragraph for Congregational Constitutions

In light of the above understanding of what the Scriptures teach about the service of women, the task force has prepared the following sample paragraph for inclusion in the constitutions of LCMS congregations that wish to permit women to hold all congregational offices that are not directly involved in carrying out specific functions of the pastoral office or in public accountability for the functioning of this office:

Women who have reached the age of ____ (1) ____ may serve as officers and as members of all boards and committees of this congregation which do not call upon them to carry out the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching in or serving as the leader of the public worship service, the public administration of the sacraments, the public exercise of church

³ See page ____ above.

⁴ See page ____ above.

⁵ See page ____ above.

⁶ See page ____ above.

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discipline.) Accordingly, a woman shall not serve as pastor of this congregation or as ____ (2) ____.

- (1) The age given shall be at the least the required age established by state law of not-for-profit organizations.
- (2) Here shall be listed those positions or offices which call for their holders to carry out the specific functions of the pastoral office as listed in this sample paragraph.

Recommendations

The task force encourages congregations to take into account the following recommendations made by the Synod itself in its officially adopted resolutions and by the CTCR in its opinions as they consider changes to their constitutions:

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.⁷
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,” be limited to lay men. (See 1989 Res. 3-10 “To Address Practice of Women Serving Holy Communion.”)
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. (See CTCR opinion on “The Service of Women in Congregational Offices of Executive Director/Vice President or Assistant Director/Vice President” in response to a request from the Minnesota South District, p. ____ of this booklet.)

A Concluding Word

When the Synod in 1969 concluded that nothing in the Scriptures prohibits women from exercising the franchise in the congregation, it also recognized the need to promote and facilitate “cautious and deliberate action in the spirit of Christian love” (Res. 2-17). Similarly, 2004 Resolution 3-08A includes a final resolve which states:

That the members of the Synod considering changes regarding the service of women in congregational offices consult with neighboring congregations, recognizing that in matters of Christian liberty, Christians

⁷ See page ____ above.

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are called, above all, to do what edifies the church, respecting the consciences of others.

“The consciences of others” must be a primary concern when congregations consider changes that may impact the life of fellow Christians in neighboring congregations. The service of women in leadership positions is one such change. Particularly on the circuit level, members of congregations may be aware of what is happening in neighboring congregations, and officers of congregations may have occasion to meet and work together.

At the same time, it should be pointed out that 1977 Res. 3-06 “To Commend Task Force on Women and Continue to Study Role of Women in the Church” recommends

That the whole church be encouraged to sensitize itself to the needs and concerns of women, to recognize the gifts that women are and can be in the mission of the church, and to utilize fully all the people of God as the church carries out its witness and ministry in the world.

To utilize fully all the people of God remains the interest of the Synod, also in the adoption of 2004 Res. 3-08A. But this desire exists side by side with the Synod’s interest in heeding the clear teachings of the Scriptures regarding the office of the public ministry, as well as its expectations regarding the respective roles of men and women.

As congregations consider changes to their constitutions, therefore, care must be taken that the teachings of the Scriptures are not obscured by how a congregation understands “official functions” and “public accountability” in its corresponding practice. To address these and other issues, 2004 Res. 3-08A encourages the members of the Synod who are contemplating change, and those who will be affected by such changes, to consult with neighboring congregations (congregations in their own circuit, in neighboring circuits, etc.), lest unnecessary offense be given. Likewise, when congregations choose to change their constitutions, in conformity with this resolution of the Synod, these decisions should be respected and honored by those congregations which decide not to implement the conclusions of the CTCR Report.

We conclude these guidelines with the “Word of Encouragement” with which the CTCR concludes its report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*:

The Biblical restraints regarding the service of women in the church and the authority of the pastoral office need not become the only, or even predominant, word we speak to one another. To speak of the “eligibility” of the service of women in congregational and synodical offices might give the impression to some that our primary concern in the contemporary church is to discourage women from exercising the privileges and responsibilities they hold as members of the priesthood of believers. Men

and women alike, however, need to help one another, first of all, to see that God's Word itself provides standards of "eligibility" for service in offices of the church, and it does so without any diminution of the value of persons. But just as important, God's people must be instruments of daily encouragement to one another and help each other to discover and appreciate the joys of Christian service. All of us would do well to emulate the apostle Paul's example in giving words of support and commendation to fellow workers in the church of God.

Members of the Task Force

Raymond L. Hartwig, Secretary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Secretary of the Commission on Constitutional Matters

Loren T. Kramer, Chairman of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations

Arleigh L. Lutz, President of the North Wisconsin District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and member of the Council of Presidents

Albert M. Marcis, Chairman of the Commission on Constitutional Matters

Samuel H. Nafziger, Executive Director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations

To Grant Woman Suffrage and Board Membership / RESOLUTION 2-17

Report 2-01, I, 1; Overtures 2-35, 2-36; Appendix II (CIF, pp. 59, 84—85, 514—522); 2-RTU (URO, p. 8)

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, in accordance with Resolutions 2-05 and 2-06 of the New York convention, made "a detailed and exhaustive study of the entire question of woman suffrage in the church" and of "the matter of full membership of women on synodical boards, commissions, and committees"; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations has submitted its report (CIF, pp. 514—522); therefore be it

Resolved, That we express gratitude to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations for this study; and be it further

Resolved, That we commend this study, as well as the study of the special committee reported in the Proceedings, 1956 (pp. 553—569), to all congregations of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod accept the following declarations as guides on this matter:

1. Those statements of Scripture which direct women to keep silent in the church and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men, we understand to mean that women ought not to hold the pastoral office or serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office.

2. The principles set forth in such passages, we believe, prohibit holding any other kind of office or membership on boards or committees in the institutional structures of a congregation, only if this involves women in a violation of the order of creation. We hold that they do not prohibit full membership of women on synodical boards, commissions, and committees. The manner of filling an office or establishing membership on a board or commission, in congregations or in the Synod, has no prohibitory Scriptural implications.

3. We hold likewise that Scripture does not prohibit women from exercising the franchise in congregational or synodical assemblies.

4. We therefore conclude that the Synod itself and the congregations of the Synod are at liberty to alter their policies and practices in regard to women's involvement in the work of the church according to these declarations, provided the policy developed conforms to the general Scriptural principles that women neither hold the pastoral office nor "exercise authority over men"; and be it finally

Resolved, That in the implementation of any changes in this area of women's ministry in the church we urge cautious and deliberate action in the spirit of Christian love.

Action: Adopted (10).

(The convention refused to consider a substitute motion declining to alter position on woman suffrage.)

1969 Convention Proceedings
pages 88-89.

APPENDIX C

1971 Convention Workbook

8.2.44

(Adopted 1970)

CCM Opinion

APPENDIX D

Suggestions for Congregational Constitutions or Bylaws Regarding the Privileges of Women (Voting and Holding Office)

The President of the Synod and many congregations have requested the Commission on Constitutional Matters to give guidance to those congregations which desire to incorporate in their constitutions or bylaws the provisions adopted by the Denver convention regarding woman suffrage.

The commission recommends that each congregation contemplating changes in this respect study thoroughly again Resolution 2-17 of the Denver convention, especially the following points:

Resolved, That the Synod accept the following declarations as guides on this matter:

1. Those statements of Scripture which direct women to keep silent in the church and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men, we understand to mean that women ought not to hold the pastoral office or serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office.

2. The principles set forth in such passages, we believe, prohibit holding any other kind of office or membership on boards or committees in the institutional structures of a congregation, only if this involves women in a violation of the order of creation. We hold that they do not prohibit full membership of women on synodical boards, commissions, and committees. The manner of filling an office or establishing membership on a board or commission, in congregations or in the Synod, has no prohibitory Scriptural implications.

3. We hold likewise that Scripture does not prohibit women from exercising the franchise in congregational or synodical assemblies.

4. We therefore conclude that the Synod itself and the congregations of the Synod are at liberty to alter their policies and practices in regard to women's involvement in the work of the church according to these declarations, provided the policy developed conforms to the general Scriptural principles that women neither hold the pastoral office nor "exercise authority over men"; and be it finally

Resolved, That in the implementation of any changes in this area of women's ministry in the church we urge cautious and deliberate action in the spirit of Christian love.

Some congregations may desire to insert a separate paragraph in their constitution or bylaws. We are proposing such a paragraph below. Other congregations may wish to change present provisions of their constitution and bylaws instead of introducing a separate new article. In any event, the commission would caution each congregation carefully to examine all articles of its constitution, bylaws, and articles of incorporation to make sure that there is agreement among and within these documents. In all probability legal counsel should be secured. All revisions of congregational constitutions must be submitted to the District President for review (Handbook, 1.21 b).

In offering the suggestion below to the congregations the Commission on Constitutional Matters is restricting itself to the position which the Synod has taken in this matter (de iure humano rather than de iure divino, by human right rather than divine right) at this point. It is therefore assumed that the Synod may further define its position in the future, thereby making it necessary perhaps to refine the suggestions being offered herewith.

Privileges of Women

Women who have reached the age of _____ may hold voting membership in the congregation and serve as officers and as members of boards and committees as long as these positions are not directly involved in the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching, the public administration of the sacraments, church discipline) and as long as this service does not violate the order of creation (surpassing authority over men). Accordingly, they shall not serve as pastor, as a member of _____, as chairman or vice-chairman of the congregation, or as chairman of _____.

The Commission on Constitutional Matters

1. The age given shall be at least the majority age established by state law.

2. Here shall be listed the board of elders or corresponding board directly involved in the functions of the pastoral office.

3. Here the congregation may list at its discretion those major policy and decision-making boards or standing committees, if any, whose chairmanship the congregation might wish to restrict to men.

To Address Concerns Regarding Woman Suffrage RESOLUTION 3-05

Overtures 3-76-78; (CW, pp. 175-76)

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod declared in 1969, and has subsequently reaffirmed, the position that "Scripture does not prohibit women from exercising the franchise in congregational ... assemblies" (1969 Res. 2-17), thereby placing the matter of woman suffrage into the realm of Christian liberty; and

WHEREAS, Some members of the Synod continue to believe that woman's suffrage is not in the realm of Christian freedom, but is contrary to the Scriptures and that the Synod was in error when in 1969 it changed its position regarding the permissibility of women exercising the franchise in voters' assemblies; and

WHEREAS, Other members of the Synod agree with the position of the Synod that woman's suffrage does indeed lie in the area of Christian liberty, but for various reasons, including the sensitivity of consciences of individuals, believe woman's suffrage is not advisable in their midst; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod reaffirm the 1969 Res. 2-17; and be it further

Resolved, That members of the Synod who are convinced that woman's suffrage does not lie in the area of Christian freedom but is contrary to the Word of God, be urged to make use of the established procedures for expressing dissent (Bylaw 2.39 c) and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod declare that honest Christian conscience can and does exist on both sides of this issue, but such difference of opinion is not divisive of Christian fellowship; and be it further

Resolved, That the members of the Synod, with due sensitivity to those for whom change in this area is a matter of conscience, continue to exercise Christian love and patience in all discussions and deliberations on this subject; and be it finally

Resolved, That we beseech the members of the Synod, by the merces of God to honor and uphold its resolutions "until such time as the Synod amends or repeals them" (Bylaw 1.09 b).

Action: Adopted (4).

(During discussion delegates declined to consider an amendment which was ruled a substitute motion as well as an amendment to substitute the words doctrinal difference for Christian conscience and the words can be divisive for is not divisive in the third resolve.)

1995 Convention Proceedings
page 119-120

2013 Convention Proceedings
p. 134-135

To Commend Faithful Service and to Study
Proper Roles of Men and Women
in the Church

RESOLUTION 4-11A

Overtures 4-16, 14-75 (CW, pp. 169-170, 7B, p. 36)

WHEREAS, God created humans distinctly as male and female, in His own image (Gen. 1-2) with distinct roles; and

WHEREAS, the fall into sin has corrupted the fulfillment of these roles (Gen. 3); and

WHEREAS, in spite of sin, Old and New Testament Scriptures are replete with examples of faithful men and women who served God through word and deed; and

WHEREAS, women in the LCMS have served the Lord in the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, on commissions and boards of the Synod, and in their own parishes, using the gifts God has given them; and

WHEREAS, men in the LCMS have served the Lord faithfully in their callings and roles as pastors, teachers, elders and deacons, using their gifts in various roles in the Synod and their own parishes; and

WHEREAS, men and women in the LCMS have served our Lord as commissioned teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life, directors of parish music, parish assistants, certified lay ministers, and deaconesses; and

WHEREAS, the Scripture exhorts men to be leaders in the family and in the church (Col. 3:19-21; Eph. 5:25-33; 1 Tim. 3:1-13), and

WHEREAS, cultural shifts have called into question the distinction of gender roles and have created confusion; and

WHEREAS, there has been a noticeable decline in men accepting appropriate responsibility in the congregation; and

WHEREAS, there has been a noticeable decline in men demonstrating and fulfilling responsibility toward women and children; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank God for the many men and women who serve our Lord faithfully and tirelessly throughout His holy Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2013 LCMS convention ask the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, in consultation with the seminary faculties, to provide materials for congregations to study the roles of men and women in the home, church, and society; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations of the Synod be encouraged to use these materials as well as other appropriate resources (e.g., materials from Lutheran Hour Ministry Men's Network, CPH, and others) for the proper nurture of our life together; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod encourage all people to use their gifts within their God-given vocations for the extension and cultivation of the Kingdom of God.

Action: Adopted (9)

(During discussion, a motion to amend Res. 4-11A by replacing its second resolve paragraph with "Resolved, That the 2013 LCMS convention encourage the use and study of the existing CTCR report, 'The Creator's Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church' as prepared by the CTCR in consultation with seminary faculties and adopted by the 2010 convention for study within the LCMS" failed [Yes: 295; No: 582]. Debate ended, the resolution was adopted without change [Yes: 774; No: 105].)

Request of Board of Regents, Concordia Lutheran College, Austin, Regarding Women Conducting Chapel Services.

In a letter dated February 17, 1992, the Secretary of the Board of Regents of Concordia Lutheran College, Austin, Texas, forwarded to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) the following request from the Board:

Question: Be it resolved, in sensitivity to the request from the Concordia Lutheran College faculty to reconsider the policy concerning the exclusion of women conducting the chapel services at Concordia Lutheran College, that the Board of Regents request the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to determine if colleges and universities have a 'word and sacrament ministry' similar to congregations, and what impact this determination would have on the BHES and the Concordia Lutheran College policy regarding women conducting chapel services.

Response:

Colleges and universities of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod do not have a "word and sacrament" ministry, as that is ordinarily understood. The Synod has not charged these institutions with administering the sacraments. Nonetheless, as the Synod's colleges and universities proclaim the Word of God in classroom, chapel, and in other venues, they extend the ministries of all the member congregations of the Synod.

At one time in the history of the Synod's higher education system, chapel services were conducted on a very deliberate "extended family devotion" model.¹ More recently, arrangements for chapel services have changed. Today the various schools commonly hold, to use the phraseology of the 1985 CTCR document *Women in the Church*, "public worship services under the responsibility of one who is called to be chaplain, campus pastor, dean of the chapel, etc." (p. 47). As this document further notes, these arrangements "would seem to be out of the realm of 'family devotions' in any acceptable meaning of the phrase" (p. 47). In short, the Synod's colleges and universities have generally moved from an "extended family devotion" model for chapel services to a model which is very similar to worship in a congregation, even if not identical with it. It must also be noted that Synod's colleges and universities do regularly have other worship opportunities, such as dormitory devotions, which are often of a very informal nature.

It is our observation that what occurs on a college campus today in the area of worship is not best understood using the family devotion model. We would, rather, take the following approach. We would distinguish between worship occasions which, essentially, involve proclamation of the Word and are a "public" expression of the corporate faith, on the one hand, and those which, essentially, involve an expression of personal faith and are "private" expressions of such faith, on the other. The former partake of the nature of a public worship service, and in accordance with the CTCR document on *Women in the Church* cited above, we would affirm that "women should not preach or lead [such] services of worship" (p. 47), even as they are not to exercise any of the distinctive functions of the pastoral office.² The latter worship occasions do not partake of such a

public worship service character but are, rather, a private expression of faith on the part of one person from among the priesthood of all believers and, therefore, should not come under this stricture. It will be a matter of judgment into which of these two categories any given "worship occasion" will fall.

It is important to be aware of what our actions "say" to those who observe them. Because our Synod's colleges and universities have generally moved from an "extended family devotion" model for chapel services to a model which is very similar to worship in a congregation, even if not identical with it (as noted above), participants and/or observers can easily come to the conclusion that what is done on a campus is also appropriate for a congregation. To be specific, to have women conduct chapel services which are a "public" expression of the corporate faith can easily "say" to those observing or involved things which we do not wish to say about what we believe and practice re: women and the pastoral office. This is especially true in our current climate culturally.

Finally, the CTCR notes that outside of campus chapel, teachers in training have opportunities for practice and training in conducting devotions in the same teacher-aid and student teaching situations where they acquire a variety of actual classroom experiences.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations
Adopted September 17, 1993

End Notes

1. Typically, the president as *paterfamilias* of the college, conducted the entirety of every chapel service, acting *in loco parentis*. Today, some people may perceive campus chapel as an "extended family devotion," similar to that conducted in the home.

2. The entire opinion of the CTCR on this issue in its document *Women in the Church* is attached as an Addendum.

3. On the basis of those statements of Scripture which direct women to be silent in the church and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men (1 Cor. 14:33-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-12), the Synod has consistently taken the position "that women ought not to hold the pastoral office or serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office" (1969 Res. 2-17; cf. 1971 Res. 2-04; 1977 Res. 3-15; 1986 Res. 2-09; 3-10; 1989 Res. 3-14). In addition, at its 1989 convention the Synod, in addressing appropriate roles for women and men in worship, affirmed that the following are included among the distinct functions to be exercised by the pastor: 1) preaching in the services of the congregation; 2) leading the formal public services of worship; 3) the public administration of the sacraments; and 4) the public administration of the office of the Keys (1989 Res. 3-14). In this resolution the Synod made specific application of its position on the pastoral office and the service of women to the practice of permitting lay persons to read the Scriptures in public worship, urging "that the 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" (1989 Res. 3-14). It should be noted that the CTCR currently has under consideration questions concerning the specific application of the Synod's position on the pastoral office and the service of women in public worship.

ADDENDUM

*Women in the Church:
Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice
(A Report of the Commission on Theology
and Church Relations, September 1985)*

5. What about the service of women in other worship contexts such as devotions conducted in the chapels of synodical colleges and other institutions?

Here, especially in the tradition of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, much has to do with definition and perception. While it is clear from the Scriptures that women should not preach or lead the formal public worship services of the church, many of the church's educational institutions conduct what has been referred to as extended "family devotions" and have asked women to serve in worship services. Institutions that hold public worship services under the responsibility of one who is called to be chaplain, campus pastor, dean of the chapel, etc., would seem to be out of the real of "family devotions" in any acceptable meaning of the phrase. In such contexts, women should not preach or lead the services of worship. In those other worship opportunities which may be appropriately understood as "devotions," the chaplain or other "spiritual head" of the community should make responsible decisions regarding the service of women, keeping in mind all of the guidelines presented in this report. It is impossible to anticipate all of the exigencies of such situations in a general study such as that offered in this document. (pp. 46-47)

Why Are You Persecuting Me?
A Christian Response to Hostility and Persecution

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Introduction

“Saul approved of his execution” (Acts 8:1). A Christian deacon named Stephen was stoned to death by an enraged mob, the first martyr to follow his Lord into death. As Stephen fell asleep in Jesus, a young Pharisee named Saul kept an approving watch over the execution—and over the cloaks of Stephen’s murderers. The death of just one person “belonging to the Way” was not enough to satisfy the zealous Pharisee. Saul, “still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord,” requested letters of permission from the high priest to arrest any believers found in the synagogues of Damascus (Acts 9:1-2). As he approached Damascus, Saul was stopped abruptly and set on a very different path with a very different purpose. Surrounded by light from heaven, Saul fell to the ground before the One he would soon learn was the risen Christ Himself. The crucified and risen Lord asked, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” The Lord did not ask, “Why are you persecuting my followers?” or “Why are you persecuting my Church?” The question was personal: “Why are you persecuting *me*?”

Encountering the risen Christ, Saul was first blinded and later baptized, his sight restored. Saul—better known as Paul—would carry the name of Christ “before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). With the death of Stephen, the persecution of the Church in Jerusalem began, and believers were scattered into the surrounding regions of Judea and Samaria. Herod “laid violent hands” on those who belonged to the Church, murdering James the brother of John (Acts 12:1-2). Peter and the other apostles were repeatedly arrested and imprisoned and, according to tradition, all of them—with the possible exception of John—suffered martyrdom. Paul, too, would suffer for the sake of Jesus’ name—“imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death” (2 Cor. 11:23), and was most likely martyred in Rome at the command of the Emperor Nero.

1

In its early centuries the Church would enjoy periods of peace and suffer through waves of hostility, even as it continued to spread among the nations. Protesting the unjust hatred directed against Christians, the Church Father Tertullian (c.160-225 A.D.) wrote, “The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed.”¹ The truth of Tertullian’s comment has been proved time and again down through the centuries. The Church continues to grow, as does the hostility against it. According to the World Watch List published by Open Doors International, a charity that supports persecuted Christians, pressure against Christians increased worldwide in 2013.²

In a nation where hostility against the Church may take less intense forms—ridicule, accusations of ignorance or intolerance, threats to religious liberty—it is possible, in freedom, to study persecution and our response to it. In countries where the saints lose homes and families, where they are imprisoned and murdered, persecution can only be endured. Satan, the crafty serpent of Eden, is still devious enough to employ hostility in forms that will be most effective for the location and circumstances. Yet Christ, by His death and resurrection has conquered him and the ancient dragon awaits his final and complete destruction. Until that Day, we will suffer our enemy’s great wrath, “because he knows that his time is short” (Rev. 12:12). Hostility and persecution will vary in intensity and duration. Yet whatever its form or time frame, hostility against the Church *will* be present until our Lord returns.

How do we, as members of the body of Christ, respond to the hostility and persecution directed against us? The following six session Bible study will examine that question. In the first session we will study the roots of persecution. The second session will examine our unexpected response of joy and forgiveness. The third, fourth, and fifth sessions will present responses of prayer and faithfulness, the proclamation of the Word, and the use of our rights as citizens. The final session will examine—in the light of the empty tomb—the cross of persecution and suffering as Martin Luther saw it, as an identifying mark of the Church.

The Lord Jesus, who endured the hostility of many Pharisees during His earthly ministry, chose an equally hostile Pharisee as His ambassador. Paul, who had once so zealously afflicted the Body of Christ, would eventually in his own flesh suffer “Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (Col. 1:24). When the followers of Jesus Christ, the members of His Body, encounter persecution and hostility on account of their faith, it is Jesus Himself who is being persecuted. Yet the Lord Jesus has, by His crucifixion and resurrection, already endured and overcome persecution, hostility, and even death for the sake of His Body, the Church. For this reason He promises us, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

¹ Tertullian, *Apology*, Chapter 50, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian in Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 55.

² The nations in which the level of persecution against Christians increased include Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Columbia, and Kazakhstan. Katherine Burgess, “Aiming for ‘Effective Anger’: The Top 50 Countries Where It’s Hardest to Be a Christian,” *Christianity Today*, posted January 8, 2014 at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleamings/channel/utilities/print.html?type=article&id=151562>. Communist governments have a long and violent history of opposition to the Church. Communist regimes among the top 50 persecuting nations today include North Korea, where Christians are sent to labor camps, and Vietnam and Laos, where Christians are viewed as “foreign agents” and pressured to renounce their faith. Islamic extremism has become the primary source of persecution in 36 of the top 50 countries on the World Watch List. <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/news/2920576/2920586/2925422>.

2

Session 1
“Why Are You Persecuting Me?” (Acts 9:4)
The Roots of Hostility and Persecution

The terrorist group *Boko Haram* (the name means “Western education is sacrilege”) wants to establish Muslim Sharia law in Nigeria. The group has stated that it will kill all the Christians in the country.³

In the past decade, the Christian population of the city of Mosul in Iraq dropped from 35,000 to 3000; more recently these remaining Christians fled after ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria) militants took control of the city. In Iraq and Syria, ISIS militants demanded that Christians convert to Islam, pay a protection tax, leave, or face death.⁴

Gay activists disrupted services at a Michigan church, shouting slogans at churchgoers, distributing fliers and claiming that Jesus was homosexual. Another group demonstrated outside of the church, but left peacefully when asked.⁵

San Diego State University allows its officially recognized campus organizations to exclude students who disagree with the message advocated by the group, unless the groups are religious. According to this policy, a Christian group cannot require that its officers or members believe in the Christian faith. A Christian fraternity and sorority declined to agree to the nondiscrimination statement and their applications to become officially recognized student organizations were rejected.⁶

Why are you persecuting me? In each of the examples above, how might that question be answered? What seems to be the underlying reason or motivation in each situation for the hostility shown toward the Christians in question? Do you think that hostility will grow worse in years to come? What might prevent hostility from increasing?

Hostility against the Body of Christ may be expressed in abusive or threatening speech, in social or political opinions and actions, or in violence as opponents attempt to marginalize, dehumanize, and even destroy those who trust in Christ. But what are the origins of such hostility? The apostle Paul, arrested in the Jerusalem temple, was accused of defiling the temple and “teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place” (Acts 21:28). Speaking in his own defense, Paul described his conversion and the reasons behind his earlier hostility against the followers of the Way. He had been strictly educated according to the Law of Moses, being as equally “zealous for God” as a persecutor as his persecutors now were (Acts 22:3). Paul persecuted believers because of his own religious beliefs and his misplaced zeal for the Word of God.

In a sermon of 1530, Martin Luther (who, with his sixteenth century followers, experienced a great deal of hostility for the sake of Christ) also linked the cause of persecution with the Word, in this case not the misplaced religious zeal of the persecutors but the faith by which the persecuted cling to the Word. Luther wrote that “the cause of our suffering is the same as that for which all the saints have suffered from the beginning. Of course the whole world must bear witness that we are not suffering because of public scandal or vice, such as adultery, fornication, murder, etc. Rather we suffer because we hold to the Word

³ Ayaan Hirsi Ali, “The Global War on Christians in the Muslim World,” *The Daily Beast*, February 6, 2012, www.thedailybeast.com.

⁴ Ruth Moon, “Thousands Flee as Terrorists Take Over Iraq’s Christian Heartland,” *Christianity Today*, June 16, 2014, <http://www.christianitytoday.com> and <http://icms.org/president/persecution>.

⁵ “Gay activists disrupt Sunday service at Michigan church,” *Catholic News Agency*, November 13, 2008.

⁶ Rob Kerby, “Are U.S. Colleges Hostile to Christian Students?” www.Beliefnet.com. This issue has moved beyond a single campus. See the articles concerning campus organizations at other universities at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/cdsetzer/2014/sepember/intervarsity-now-derecognized-in-california-state-universit.html> and <http://www.intervarsity.org/page/vanderbilt-university>.

3

of God, preach it, hear it, learn it, and practice it.”⁷ As Paul had come to see and share, the followers of the Way are rightly rooted in Christ and His Word. The hostility leveled against them has deep roots of its own.

A review of the hostility directed against Christ and His followers takes us back to a tree deeply rooted in the newly created soil of Eden. Satan, “the ancient serpent” and “deceiver of the whole world” (Rev. 12:9), successfully tempted Eve, and Adam with her, to despise the Word of God and so—they were led to believe—become wise through eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁸ They ate of the forbidden fruit, and instead of wisdom gained a terrible and intimate knowledge of evil, sin, guilt, and shame. The corrupting stain of sin was inherited by their children—by all of us. The hostility of Satan, who was intent on destroying the Word and work of God, bore early fruit in Cain, the firstborn son of Adam and Eve. Both of their sons offered sacrifices to God, but by faith Abel offered “a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain” (Heb. 11:4), and Cain became angry enough to kill his brother. The hatred and violence directed against the Word of God, against Jesus, the Word made flesh, and against those who cling to Him by faith has not ceased since those early days of the world. Generations upon generations later, the apostle John would see the results of the endless hostility against the Word as he glimpsed in heaven the souls of those who were martyred “for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God” (Rev. 20:4).

The martyrs knew, as do we, and Satan as well—although he puts no faith in it—that “man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Deut. 8:3). The Word sent forth by the Father, the Word made flesh, accomplished the purpose for which He was sent (Is. 55:11). The Gospel Word, the good news of all that Jesus has done to win salvation for us, is a saving Word, the Word from the mouth of the Lord by which we live. The Gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). The powerful Word of the Gospel is a personal Word. Jesus told His disciples, “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Luke 10:16). Jesus asked Paul, “Why are you persecuting me?” The hostile forces that reject the Word are arrayed not only against countless faithful witnesses, but also against the crucified and risen Son and the Father who sent Him. Still, Satan makes every attempt to snatch away the saving Word, as birds devour seed sown on a hardened path (Matt. 13:19). Those who thrust aside the Word judge themselves “unworthy of eternal life” (Acts 13:46). For this reason the ancient serpent does not want the life-giving Word to take root, or if it has, he seeks to uproot it and bring disaster, as he did in Eden.

Consider again the examples of persecution at the beginning of this lesson, or other situations of which you are aware. How does each reflect the hostility of Satan against the Word of God?

In his epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul examines Eden’s fall into sin as if under a microscope. Like a deadly virus escaping a laboratory, sin spreads its infection across the human race—with Christians and persecutors, believers and unbelievers alike, falling under God’s just condemnation (Rom. 2:1-2; Rom. 3:22-23). In his examination of sin, Paul discusses the unfaithfulness of all people toward their Creator, as they worship and serve “the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). Rebellion against the Creator manifests itself in “all manner of unrighteousness,” including sexual immorality, envy, murder, gossip, malice, and strife (see Rom. 1:26-32).

⁷ Martin Luther, Sermon at Coburg on Cross and Suffering (1530), *Luther’s Works*, vol. 51, ed. and trans. John W. Doherty (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 200.

⁸ Concerning the fall into sin, Luther wrote that Eve “let the Word go and kept thinking what a fine apple it was and that after all such a little thing was of no great importance. So she went her way. And when one lets the Word go, there can be no other result. But when we stay with the Word and hold on to it, we shall certainly have the experience of conquering and coming out of it fine.” *Luther’s Works* 51:205.

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Read Romans 1:18-32. What details of Paul's discussion reveal the roots of hostility and persecution against God, His Word, and His people? Why is it important to remember that the persecuted fall under condemnation for sin just as surely as those who are hostile to them?

As the New Testament narrative begins, the hostility rooted in Eden bursts into full and poisonous flower, directed against Jesus, the Word made flesh, and against all who would come to walk in His light. In Jesus "was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). However terrible the darkness and evil, it has not, and cannot, overcome the Light: "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5).

Read John 3:16-21. What reasons does Jesus Himself give for the hostility against the light? Why do people love the darkness? **Read Mark 9:38-41.** How sharp is the dividing line between darkness and light? Are there "gray areas"?

Jesus, the Light of the world, warned His disciples, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). A servant is not greater than his master and should not expect to be treated any better than the master (John 15:20; Matt. 10:24-25). The unbelieving world persecuted Jesus the Master; it will persecute His servants also. Of all of the promises of Jesus, this may be one that we would rather not hear. But as the experiences of the disciples would later show (Acts 5:41), there is joy to be found even in that promise.

The plans and purposes of God are beyond our knowledge and understanding, except as He chooses to reveal them to us in Holy Scripture. Even then we may not understand those purposes and can only cling to the Word. We are warned, as Jesus warned His disciples, of the hostility that will be directed against us as His followers. That very "advance warning" reminds us that even the powers of darkness arrayed against us are subject to the Light. The risen Lord Jesus revealed to the Christians in Smyrna that they were going to suffer persecution, but He told them not to be afraid. The devil would throw some of them into prison and "for ten days" they would have tribulation (Rev. 2:10). The Lord was well aware of what lay ahead for His people and He set limits to the suffering they would soon experience.

The Lord was well aware of what lay ahead for Him in His earthly ministry as well. Throughout the Old Testament, the prophets foretold the hostility that would be directed against the Word made flesh (see, for example, Psalm 2, Psalm 22, and Isaiah 53). The Scriptures mapped out His path to the cross in chilling and accurate detail. Jesus often told His disciples what to expect in those final days in Jerusalem (Matt. 16:21; Matt. 17:22-23; Matt. 20:18-19). All that was done to Jesus, the persecution, rejection, betrayal and crucifixion, was done "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23).

Briefly review events in the life of Jesus, from His birth to His crucifixion. Give examples of the hostility directed against Him. How was He persecuted? How was Satan, directly and indirectly, involved in the hostility against Jesus? **Read 1 Peter 2:18-25.** How did Jesus respond to the persecution directed against Him? For a short time, "the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53) eclipsed the Light. Yet what was the ultimate result of the persecution directed against Jesus? **Read Romans 8:16-17.** What is the ultimate result for those who suffer as servants of the Master?

The book of Hebrews provides a catalog of saints, many of whom endured persecution. They were tortured, mocked, imprisoned, stoned, sawn in two, and killed with the sword. At the head of this parade of triumphant, persecuted servants, "of whom the world was not worthy," (Heb. 11:32-38) stands Jesus, their Master, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of God" (Heb. 12:2). We are told to remember the hostility endured by Jesus, that we "may not grow weary or fainthearted" (Heb. 12:3). The same chapter of Hebrews goes on to reveal a deeper purpose behind the hostility we experience, although we may not always recognize, understand, or welcome it: "And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? 'My son, do not regard

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lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons" (Heb. 12:5-7). Every branch of the true Vine that does bear fruit the Father prunes, "that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2).

As sons and daughters, saints and servants of the Master, we will suffer the world's hostility. The ancient serpent from Eden is still determined to "make war" on all those "who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 12:17). The darkness still seeks to overcome the Light. Luther, writing to console those who were persecuted, commented: "It is the nature of the divine word to be heartily received by a few, but to be persecuted ruthlessly by many."⁹ Holy Scripture tells us, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12). Persecution, whatever its purpose or limits, is guaranteed. How should we respond?

Responsive Reading . . . Psalm 27

⁹ Martin Luther, A Letter of Consolation to All Who Suffer Persecution (1522), *Luther's Works*, vol. 43, ed. Gustav K. Wiencke (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 62.

6

Session 2 "My Power is Made Perfect in Weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9) Responding in Joy and Forgiveness

"For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). The apostle Paul repeatedly asked the Lord to deliver him from a thorn in the flesh, "a messenger of Satan" sent to harass him and keep him from becoming conceited (2 Cor. 12:7). The nature of this "thorn" is not known, although scholars have suggested that it may refer to those who attacked and persecuted Paul or to a physical issue such as malaria, a speech impediment, or difficulties with his eyesight. Whatever the nature of the affliction, the Lord replied, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Paul responds in faith, concerning his weakness as well as the insults and persecutions he experienced: "I am content." The Greek word for Paul's response, *eudokeo*, is sometimes translated to mean something stronger than mere contentment. It is the Father's response to His Son: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17; see also Matt. 17:5).

Repeatedly imprisoned, whipped five times, beaten three times, stoned and left for dead, shipwrecked and adrift at sea (2 Cor. 11:23-25), Paul is pleased? He is not only pleased—he boasts about his weakness, because in weakness the power of Christ is made perfect, as it was in the humiliation and shame of the cross. Christ crucified is for us who believe "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). As we are pleased and take delight in Jesus' cross and the salvation won for us there, we may be pleased—or at least content—with the crosses we bear for His sake, because in them God is at work and displaying His mighty power.

Read Acts 5:17-42. What message must the apostles proclaim? What is Gamaliel's advice, and how does the Jewish ruling council respond? Why do the apostles rejoice? The apostles were not "of the world," but how might the world have expected them to respond?

The apostles rejoiced at being counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus. One of those apostles, Peter, would write in his first epistle that believers should not be surprised when a "fiery trial" came upon them. Instead they were to rejoice, Peter told them, "insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (1 Pet. 4:13-14). However, believers should not suffer for the wrong reasons—"as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler" (1 Pet. 4:15). We must not become self-made martyrs or create situations for the purpose of attracting hostility, seeking for ourselves glory that rightly belongs to our Lord. As the writer to the Hebrews cautions, "In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood" (Heb. 12:4).

As Christians we are to go about the daily work to which God has called us; we are not to search out a cross to bear. In a sermon on John 18:2, Luther commented that Jesus did not try to flee the suffering that awaited him on the night he was betrayed, but went with His disciples to Gethsemane according to His usual custom. "[Christ] followed along to His death, and yet He did not seek out the cross for Himself. He took His ordinary path as He was accustomed to do. This is a teaching for everyone, that we should neither seek nor flee the cross."¹⁰

¹⁰ Martin Luther, On the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (1528-29/1557), *Luther's Works*, vol. 69, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 149.

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Consider the following contemporary examples:

The Westboro Baptist Church, known especially for its protests at military funerals, planned to protest at the 2014 Colorado State University graduation. The protesters believe that the graduating students of the current generation are "unique in their filthy manner of life; unique in the lies that pervade their every thought" and unique in their enabling of same-sex marriage.¹¹

In 2009, Dr. George Tiller, who performed late term abortions, was shot to death at his church in Wichita, Kansas. His killer, Scott Roeder, was sentenced to life in prison. Roeder defended his actions, stating that he had to obey God's law to save babies and that God's judgment against the United States would "sweep over this land like a prairie wind." Roeder promised to "avenge every drop of innocent blood."¹²

How have the individuals in the above news stories created crosses for themselves? Are they suffering dishonor for the name of Jesus? What impact do such events have on the world's perception of Jesus, His Church, and His Word?

We are not called to run toward persecution; it may in fact be necessary at times to flee from it, as the early believers fled Jerusalem when persecution arose against the Church (Acts 8:1; Acts 11:19). As He sends His disciples out "as sheep in the midst of wolves" with the urgent message of the kingdom, Jesus warns them, "When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next" (Matt. 10:16-23). In Antioch of Pisidia, when persecution rose up against them, Paul and Barnabas "shook off the dust from their feet" and moved on (Acts 13:51; see also Luke 10:10-12).

At other times, flight may not be desirable or possible. It may be necessary to stand and take up the cross in a particular place or situation. Paul wants to hear that the Christians in Philippi are "standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have" (Phil. 1:27-30). Before Jesus warns of the necessity of flight He tells His sheep not to be anxious about their witness when facing the wolves: "For what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matt. 10:19-20). Throughout His earthly ministry Jesus stood firm against the unbelieving Pharisees and others who opposed Him, yet at times it was necessary for Him to elude their hostile grasp because "His hour had not yet come" (John 7:30; see also John 10:39 and Luke 4:29-30). But when His hour came, He took up His cross and died for those who persecuted Him.

The circumstances and limits of persecution remain in God's hands and are bound by His will. We pray that we will always stand firm and strive "side by side for the faith of the Gospel." But for what reasons or in what circumstances might it become necessary to flee or avoid persecution instead of facing the hostility?

Jesus Christ has chosen us out of the world to be His own, and therefore, as He warned, the world will hate us (John 15:19). Still, we should not try to be hated or live in a hateful manner. The world should see in us the love that marks us as followers of Jesus: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Although they would in due time experience persecution

¹¹ Channel 9 News and the Fort Collins Coloradoan, April 16, 2014 at <http://www.9news.com/story/news/local/2014/04/16/westboro-baptist-church-to-protest-csu-graduation/7793793>.
¹² Roxanna Hegeman, "Scott Roeder Sentenced to Life in Prison," *The Huffington Post*, April 2, 2010 at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/04/01/scott-roeder-sentenced-to_n_522654.html.

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and flee from it, the early believers in Jerusalem were not known for protest or murder. They joyfully shared their possessions with those in need, worshiped in the temple, continued in the apostolic teaching and the breaking of bread, and found favor "with all the people" (Acts 2:42-47). Overseers, or bishops, were to be "well thought of by outsiders" so that they would not fall into disgrace (1 Tim. 3:7). With the daily possibility of facing ridicule or shame, we are told, "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Rom. 12:17-18; see also Matt. 5:38-48).

There is a reputation at stake here, and it is not ours. We are sheep (in the midst of wolves) and our Shepherd leads us "in paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Ps. 23:3). The apostles rejoiced that they had been counted worthy to suffer dishonor for confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord (Acts 5:41; Phil. 2:9-10). As we follow in the paths of righteousness set out before us, we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:43-48), reflecting the perfect love of our heavenly Father. Loving our enemies means desiring, as our Father does, that they be forgiven and saved, for God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). We must not be "overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21), as Jesus did, when on the day called Good Friday He overcame the evils of sin, death, and Satan. Jesus prayed for His persecutors, for those who crucified Him: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Such forgiveness is admittedly one-sided. Those who nailed Jesus to the cross most likely did not repent of it and were not interested in His forgiveness. Even we, whose sins He bore in His body on that tree, were "still sinners" (Rom. 5:8) and "hostile to God" (Rom. 8:7) when Jesus died for us. Such forgiving love may be one-sided, but the Word does not return empty; it accomplishes its purpose. We, by God's grace, have been brought to repentance and faith. The centurion and soldiers keeping watch would say of the Crucified One who had prayed for forgiveness for them, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matt. 27:54). Stephen, following the example of His Savior, prayed for his murderers, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60). In the case of a young Pharisee named Saul, we see one example of the way in which Stephen's prayer was granted.

The world that hates us needs our witness and our prayers. In 1523, an Augustinian monk and pastor, Henry of Zutphen, was arrested in Antwerp for embracing the evangelical faith of the Reformation. He was freed and continued preaching in other cities, but two years later Henry was kidnapped and murdered by an angry, drunken mob. After Henry was martyred, Martin Luther wrote to the Christians in Bremen to console them at the death of their pastor. Brother Henry was with the Lord; it was his murderers who needed the prayers of the Bremen Christians: "His murderers have already been repaid enough and more than enough by staining their hands so terribly with innocent blood and heaping upon themselves such great and awful guilt in the sight of God. There is really far more reason to weep and lament for them than for the sainted Henry, and to pray that not only they, but the whole land of Dithmarschen, may be converted and come to the knowledge of the truth."¹³ God could use even the evil deeds of Henry's murderers "to strengthen his Word so that it wins more people than it otherwise would."¹⁴

In the following examples of persecution in recent years, how might God work through these people to strengthen his Word? How have you witnessed the Word of God at work in other circumstances of persecution, perhaps even in your own life?

¹³ Martin Luther, *The Burning of Brother Henry* (1525), *Luther's Works*, vol. 32, ed. George W. Forell (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 267. The first martyrs for the Reformation faith were also Augustinians from Antwerp, Henry Vos and John van den Esschen, who were burned in Brussels on July 1, 1523. Luther wrote a hymn, a folk ballad titled "A New Song Here Shall Be Begun," to commemorate the faith and martyrdom of these two young men. *Luther's Works*, vol. 53, ed. Ulrich S. Leopold (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 211-216.

¹⁴ *Luther's Works*, 32:271. Augustine, the fourth century Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, wrote, "But let [the Church] bear in mind, that among her enemies lie hid those who are destined to be fellow-citizens, that she may not think it a fruitless labor to bear what they inflict as enemies until they become confessors of the faith." Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Random House, 1993), 38.

*After the murder of five Amish girls in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, in 2006, the Amish "verbally expressed their forgiveness to the memory of the killer. They refused to talk badly about him or degrade his character. The Amish also designated a portion of the fund that poured in from around the world for the Amish schoolgirls to the widow and the children of the shooter."*¹⁵

*In a wave of anti-Christian violence in Kandhamal in India, churches were desecrated and destroyed, Christian homes were burned, and hundreds of Christians were tortured and murdered. Yet a man who had been part of a mob later said of the Christians, "They are still suffering. But they have no complaints and they are living happily . . . If Jesus could influence people's lives to such an extent, I would prefer to be part of that faith." Another man said, "I have seen the violence and their suffering. Yet they have not given up their faith. So I decided to embrace their faith."*¹⁶

When we face hostility for the sake of Jesus' name, the wisdom of the world might tell us to simply "rise above it." We may instead, in joyful imitation of our Lord, "stoop below it" as our Lord humbled Himself to become flesh and stooped down to shoulder the weight of the cross for our salvation. As Jesus did, we can love and forgive those who persecute us, praying that they too will "come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

Responsive Reading . . . Psalm 23

¹⁵ Kate Naseef, "How Can the Amish Forgive What Seems Unforgivable?" *USA Today*, October 1, 2007 at http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-10-01-amish_n.htm

¹⁶ Anto Akkara, "Persecuted Indian Christians Evangelize . . . by Forgiving," from the book, *Faith Goes Viral*, quoted at CatholicCulture.org, ed. Philip F. Lawler, December 12, 2013, at <http://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/articles.cfm?id=606>.

Session 3 "Earnest Prayer for Him Was Made to God" (Acts 12:5) *Responding in Prayer and Faithfulness*

In August of 2013, Christian homes and businesses and 32 churches in Egypt were looted and burned. The following month, two suicide bombers struck the All Saints Anglican Church in Peshawar, Pakistan, leaving 85 people dead and 140 wounded. "Today around the world, over 200 million are suffering for their faith in Jesus Christ. Believers all around the world face violence, imprisonment, and even death because of their faith in Christ. More than ever, Christians who suffer need our prayers."¹⁷ In March of 2014, gunmen attacked a church in Mombasa, Kenya, killing six people and wounding other worshippers. A Lutheran bishop in Kenya writes, "It is imperative that we pray and support each other, especially those who are being persecuted."¹⁸ The organization Open Doors International, which provides support and encouragement to persecuted believers worldwide, began the "International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church," a day usually observed near All Saints' Day in November. Such prayers, of course, cannot be limited to a single day. Wherever and whenever the saints, the members of Christ's Body, face persecution, they pray—and other members of the Body pray for them.¹⁹

Old and New Testament believers alike faced persecution with prayer and faithful witness as they suffered reproach for the sake of Christ (Heb. 11:26). Suffering illness and loss at the hand of Satan (who was, in turn, restrained by the hand of God), faithful Job "fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said . . . 'The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD'" (Job 1:20-21). Upon learning that an edict had been signed forbidding prayer to any "god" other than King Darius, the exiled Israelite Daniel followed his usual custom: "He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously" (Dan. 6:10). In Gethsemane on the night He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus prayed in agony that His Father's will be done, His sweat "like great drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44). After the apostle James was martyred, Peter was imprisoned and "earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church" (Acts 12:5).

Consider the above biblical examples. What is the content of the prayers of our Lord Jesus and the saints as they face persecution? Do you see any similarities in their prayers? Why is prayer so important as God's people face hostility and persecution?

Jesus, "the faithful witness" (Rev. 1:5), that is, the faithful martyr, taught us to pray.²⁰ In the prayer that we call His own, Jesus sets out the treasured words that provide a pattern for all of our prayers, including our prayers under persecution.²¹ "Our Father in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). In this prayer, we do not call out to "My Father," but to "Our Father." As we pray these petitions in the face of hostility we remember that we are united in one Body with our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world, with the martyred saints who rest from their labors, and with our Lord Jesus. We are children of one Father, "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17).

¹⁷ Matthew Block, "A Year of Martyrs: Praying for the Persecuted Church," *The Canadian Lutheran* (September/October 2013), 20.

¹⁸ Joseph Omolo, "Under Attack in Kenya," *The Lutheran Witness* (June/July 2014), 5.

¹⁹ Resources concerning prayers for the persecuted Church are available at <http://blogs.lcms.org/2014/statement-on-persecution> and <http://blogs.lcms.org/2014/statement-on-christian-persecution-in-iraq>.

²⁰ Our English word *martyr* comes from the Greek word for witness. In the early centuries of the Church (as in many parts of the world today), to be a witness for Christ may well have meant becoming a martyr for Him.

²¹ See the 2011 LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations document, *Theology and Practice of Prayer: A Lutheran View*, especially the discussion of the Lord's Prayer on pages 44-61. The document is available at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=1745>.

"Hallowed be your name" (Matt. 6:9). The people of Israel suffered in exile, enduring the discipline of the Lord because of their faithless idolatry. With Jerusalem in ruins, the psalmist prays, "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake!" (Ps. 79:9) When God set out to save His people and return them to their land, He told them, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations" (Ezek. 36:22). In saving His people God would vindicate, that is, prove or confirm, the holiness of His great name (Ezek. 36:23). Suffering the hostility of His enemies for the sake of our salvation, Jesus embodied the words of the prayer He taught us as He vindicated the holiness of His Father's name: "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do" (John 17:1-4). We pray that those who must bear the cross will hallow our Father's name, remaining faithful to Him and obedient to the Word.

"Your kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10). Jesus is the one in whom the kingdom comes. We live within the kingdom now, because wherever the King is, there we find the kingdom (Matt. 18:20; Luke 17:21). However, on a day yet to come, we will know and enjoy the kingdom in its fullness and glory. The King promises, "Surely I am coming soon," to which the suffering saints reply, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). The citizens of the kingdom endure persecution for the sake of the King, but we may not take revenge. That is to be left in the Lord's hands and the persecuted Church prays for that day of divine justice to come: "How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever? Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the fold of your garment and destroy them!" (Ps. 74:10-11) Even the saints already at rest in the presence of the Lamb, those "who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne" long for the day of judgment and justice: "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:9-10). The kingdom is both "now" and "not yet" and so, entrusting themselves "to him who judges justly" (1 Pet. 2:23), the persecuted saints still pray, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Read Revelation 19:11-16. *Jesus, the Word made flesh, endured the shame and humiliation of the cross, but here He is portrayed in majesty as King of kings and Lord of lords. What comfort in persecution is found in these verses? For what should we pray?*

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Explaining this petition of the Lord's Prayer, Martin Luther writes,

Therefore we who are Christians must surely expect to have the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies and must expect that they will inflict every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where God's Word is preached, accepted, or believed, and bears fruit, there the holy and precious cross will also not be far behind . . .

Therefore, there is just as much need here as in every other case to ask without ceasing: "Dear Father, your will be done and not the will of the devil or of our enemies, nor of those who would persecute and suppress your holy Word or prevent your kingdom from coming, and grant that we may bear patiently and overcome whatever we must suffer on its account, so that our poor flesh may not yield or fall away through weakness or sloth."²²

To pray that God's will be done is not a prayer of doubt or cringing resignation. As in the case of faithful Job (Job 1:12; Job 2:6) and the imprisoned Christians of Smyrna (Rev. 2:10), the forces of evil arrayed

²² Martin Luther, *Large Catechism, The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 448-449:66-67.

against us are subject to the will of God. To ask that God's will be done is to see His will as a fortress, a wall, against which Satan, his evil angels, and his earthly forces "shall dash themselves to pieces."²³

We also pray on behalf of the persecuted Church. "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). Christians throughout the world, even if they do not lose their lives, may see their homes, businesses, livelihoods, and reputations destroyed. We can support them, whenever possible, in their physical needs. We pray that their families would be defended, that homes and work be protected or restored, and that they with all the saints might continue to feed—in His holy Supper and by faith through the study of His Word—on Jesus "the bread of life" (John 6:35).²⁴

As prayers of the persecuted Church, the next two petitions may be linked. We ask our Father to "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" and then pray, "And lead us not into temptation" (Matt. 6:12-13). In the same sermon in which he teaches us to pray, Jesus tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44). The temptation to hate or seek revenge against those who hurt us may all too easily turn us away from the Word. In times of persecution, as at all times, we must repent of our loveless thoughts, words, and actions. We must repent if we have sought out of pride to construct a cross for ourselves or if we have earned the hostility of the world through behavior that does not reflect the love of Jesus Christ, who forgave those who crucified Him.

Finally, we pray, "Deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13). Surely every saint enduring the hostility of Satan and the world has uttered this petition. With the psalmist we cry out:

"In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me!" (Ps. 31:1) Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39). It was the Father's will that the Son should not be delivered but drink the cup of suffering. In His righteousness God has delivered us—deliverance that took place by way of the cross. It may be that our deliverance, the deliverance of the persecuted saints, may also take place through a cross. The Lord who taught us to pray also taught us, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 16:24-25).

Which petition of the Lord's Prayer most clearly describes for you a Christian response to hostility and persecution? **Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 26-27 and Hebrews 13:3.** Why is it important to recall that our Lord teaches us to pray in plural—for us, for our needs, and not just for individual needs?

The apostles were arrested in Jerusalem because they had "greatly annoyed" the Jewish religious leaders by proclaiming the death and resurrection of Jesus and healing a man in Jesus' name. In this early instance of persecution, the apostles were ordered not to speak of Jesus, further threatened, and released. The apostles immediately gathered with the other believers for prayer. They hallowed God's name, calling on the "Sovereign Lord," the Creator. They acknowledged that His will had been done on earth when Jesus' enemies—Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel—acted against Him, doing whatever God's hand and plan "had predestined to take place." Then, in the face of continuing threats from those same enemies, the believers asked that they might speak His Word with boldness (Acts 4:23-31). Responding to hostility they asked for courage to faithfully proclaim the Word of the Gospel, and that is what they continued to do.

²³ Luther, Large Catechism, *The Book of Concord*, 449-69.

²⁴ "So there is a twofold eating of Christ's flesh. First, there is a spiritual kind of eating, which Christ treats above all in John 6 [35-58]. This occurs in no other way than with the Spirit and faith in the proclamation of and meditation on the gospel, as well as in the Supper." Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article VII, *The Book of Concord*, 604.61.

God is glorified in the faithfulness of His saints, as Jesus glorified His Father by accomplishing all He was sent to do. Jesus stood in the place of sinners and did what Adam and Eve failed to do, what we so often fail to do. He remained faithful to the Word, obedient to His Father even to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:8). Jesus, the faithful witness, stood before His persecutor Pontius Pilate and "made the good confession." In the same way, the young pastor Timothy would also confess his faith "in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:12-16). Paul encouraged Timothy, reminding him not to be ashamed but to "share in suffering for the Gospel" (2 Tim. 1:8). In the face of suffering, Timothy is to "follow the pattern of sound words" that he learned from Paul and to "guard the good deposit" entrusted to him (2 Tim. 1:13-14). Paul, himself suffering and bound in chains, endures everything in order that the elect saints may be saved. He seriously warns Timothy, and us, to remain faithful to our faithful Lord: "If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

Persecution and hostility will come, and circumstances will grow worse in these last days. Paul warns that "evil people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." In the face of increasing evil, how do we respond? Paul gives Timothy the answer: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed . . . how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:13-15).

Read 2 Timothy 3:10-17. Persecutors often target the leadership of the Church. What is especially damaging about such an attack? How, unknown to the persecutors, might such an attack strengthen the Church? How will the study of the Word encourage us to be faithful and strengthen us in the face of hostility?

Facing certain death, the Old Testament saints Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego testified to God's power to save. Even if He should choose not to save them, they would remain faithful to Him. Joined in the fiery furnace by one like "a son of the gods" and saved, the faithful witness of the three young men bore fruit as the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar blessed the God of Israel (Dan. 3:8-30). We, too, must continue in what we have learned and firmly believed, confident that the Son of God has delivered us by His death and resurrection and that He stands with us as we endure the fires of hostility. At our Baptism, Christ made us His own and Satan declared war against us, the beginning of a lifelong battle. In Confirmation we acknowledge the gifts of God received in our Baptism, promising to "renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways" and to remain steadfast in the confession of our Christian faith and in the Church, willing "to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it." No hostility or persecution, not even death, can separate us from the love of Christ or from His promise: "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

Read together the following responses from the Confirmation service of the Lutheran Service Book.²⁵ Confirmations promise to renounce the devil and his works and ways. They confess the Apostles' Creed and their belief that Scripture is the inspired Word of God, also affirming the truth and faithfulness of the doctrine of the Lutheran Church. Those promises are followed by the three responses below. How are these promises especially meaningful in the face of hostility and persecution?

²⁵ Lutheran Service Book (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 272-273.

P: Do you intend to hear the Word of God and receive the Lord's Supper faithfully?

R: I do, by the grace of God.

P: Do you intend to live according to the Word of God, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even to death?

R: I do, by the grace of God.

P: Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?

R: I do, by the grace of God.

Responsive Reading . . . Psalm 2

Session 4:

"To Speak Your Word with All Boldness" (Acts 4:29)

Responding with the Proclamation of the Word

Abdi Noor (not his real name), converted to Christianity from Islam. He heard the Gospel on a radio program and later worked with Lutheran Hour Ministries in Nairobi. After Abdi was repeatedly attacked and beaten because of his conversion, Christian friends suggested that he go into hiding. Abdi replied, "Now that I know the truth . . . Now that I know how much God loves them . . . Now that I know what a lie my people have believed . . . Now that I can see, I cannot keep quiet! . . . I will not miss an opportunity to share the marvelous news that a person can have a relationship with God Himself through Christ."²⁶

After the disciples were arrested and released, they met with other believers to pray. They asked that the Lord would "grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness" and prayed that the Lord would confirm His Word with signs and wonders. Their prayer was heard, the place where they met was shaken, and "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:29-31). Persecution continued against the Church and the apostles were arrested again. An angel released them and commanded them, "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life" (Acts 5:20). They did so, and were arrested again, although the officers acted more cautiously this time. The perplexed authorities were angry because the disciples were proclaiming the death and resurrection of Jesus. Ordered again to stop preaching the good news, the disciples responded: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). They must obey the Lord who, before His ascension, had commissioned them: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

After Jesus' ascension, the apostles chose a man to take Judas' place. According to the job description, the person had to be someone who accompanied the others during Jesus' earthly ministry, from His baptism to His ascension, because the new apostle would also be a witness to His resurrection (Acts 1:21-26). The apostles were Jesus' witnesses, His martyrs.²⁷ It is what martyrs do, it is who they are. It is who we are—witnesses. We have not yet physically seen the risen Lord, but we among those blessed people "who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). We are witnesses who have seen the risen Savior through the witness of the Word.

Read Matthew 28:16-20 and Luke 24:45-48. What is the content, the heart and center, of the proclamation that must be continued, even in the face of hostility? What are the similarities and differences between Jesus' words in these passages from Matthew and Luke? As we remain faithful in our proclamation, what particular aspects of these words might provoke hostility against the Word?

The roots of hostility against the Word stretch back to Eden, but of course the Word of the Gospel was heard even then. Adam and Eve were assured that the offspring of the woman would "bruise the head of the hostile serpent" (Gen. 3:15). When the time came for the promise to be fulfilled, "God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law" (Gal. 4:4-5). The woman's offspring, the innocent Lamb of sacrifice, was "foreknown before the foundation of the world" and was made known in these last times for our sake (1 Pet. 1:20). We, too, were chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4), chosen and made holy for a holy purpose.

Read 1 Peter 2:4-12. What is said in these verses about hostility toward the Word? What is said about the plans and purposes of God? Who are we and what is our purpose? What kind of behavior supports our witness?

²⁶ John Maina, "Beaten for Jesus," *The Canadian Lutheran* (September/October 2013), 7.

²⁷ The English word martyr, as noted earlier, comes from the Greek word for witness.

We are called to proclaim the mighty acts of God who called us out of darkness into His light. It is not always a welcome proclamation. In prayer to His Father, Jesus said of His disciples, "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:14). Faithful proclamation of the Word will bear fruit, but as we know, it will also provoke the hostility of the world and of Satan, who cannot tolerate the Word. Commenting on the fall into sin, Martin Luther said, "Note, then, the strategy of the devil in attacking only faith. He does not assail the heathen, unbelievers, and non-Christians. These stick to him like scales. But he sees that he cannot get at those who have God's Word, faith, and the Spirit. . . . [The devil] must attack the matter in a different way and take the chief possession. If he has brought a man to doubt whether it really is the Word of God, then he has won the game."²⁸

Speaking to His disciples of Satan's hostility against them, Jesus told them, "What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops." He immediately added a warning about the enemy: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:27-28). We fear the enemy, but we know the enemy fears the Gospel Word. He will make martyrs out of witnesses wherever and whenever he can. But the Father who cares for sparrows values His beloved witnesses much more. Jesus followed with a promise and a warning concerning the eternally serious nature of our witness: "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

Faithful witness to the Word, in times of peace or persecution, is not optional. This responsibility to be faithful witnesses even in times of persecution may seem like a burden heavier than the persecution itself. How can we know if we will have the strength to faithfully present our witness? Anticipating both our fear and our need, Jesus gives us His promise: "When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matt. 10:19-20).

Proclamation may provoke persecution, yet the circumstances of persecution may at the same time present opportunities for faithful proclamation. When Stephen was arrested and brought before the Jewish ruling council, he used the opportunity to review for his opponents the acts of God in Israel's history and to speak of the coming of Jesus, "the Righteous One," who had also suffered at their hands (Acts 7:1-53). After Stephen was martyred, many believers left Jerusalem and "those who were scattered went about preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4). Philip was among those scattered into the world with the Word. He brought the Gospel to Samaria and told an Ethiopian eunuch the good news of Jesus. Stoned and left for dead in Lystra, Paul rose up and continued to preach the Gospel. He encouraged the believers to continue in the faith, "saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Who should know better about those tribulations than Paul? In Philippi, Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned. From their prison cell they proclaimed the Word, "praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:25). The proclamation of the Word takes place in many ways. Prayers and hymns count!²⁹ When an earthquake freed his prisoners, the frightened jailer asked

²⁸ Martin Luther, Sermon on Genesis 3:1-6 (1523), ed. Edward M. Plass, *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, vol. 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 1491.

²⁹ Concerning hymn writing, Martin Luther commented that Paul "exhorted the Colossians to sing spiritual songs and Psalms heartily unto the Lord, so that God's Word and Christian doctrine might be instilled and implanted in many ways." Martin Luther, Preface to the Wittenberg Hymnal (1524), *Luther's Works*, vol. 53, ed. Ulrich S. Leopold (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 316. Hymns may help sustain faith during times of persecution. A sixteenth century Lutheran pastor wrote that a time will come when there is "no pure public preaching, and the Gospel will be preserved only in the houses, by pious Christian fathers. These will find the hymns of Luther to be of great service and benefit . . . God grant his blessing and grace, that they may use them well for admonition,

how he might be saved and was told to believe in the Lord Jesus. The seed of the Word was planted and bore fruit. The jailer and his household believed and were baptized.

Many psalms express the suffering of God's people in the face of persecution. Consider the words of psalms, hymns, and other Christian songs. How is the Gospel message presented? How and when might such psalms, songs, and hymns be a useful witness?

In Athens, Paul's proclamation took a different form as he sought to gain a hearing with a crowd that was not necessarily hostile but somewhat skeptical. Some were interested; others called him a "babbler." Provoked by the many idols he saw in the city, Paul spoke of the Gospel in the synagogue and the marketplace. He introduced the Athenians to the true God, the God they worshiped as unknown. He proclaimed repentance, judgment, and resurrection. Once again the Word bore fruit. Some of Paul's hearers mocked him, but others said, "We will hear you again about this," and some of them believed (Acts 17:16-34). Falsely accused and arrested in Jerusalem, Paul quieted the enraged mob and told them how he met the risen Lord on the road to Damascus (Acts 21:27 to 22:21).

As a prisoner Paul would eventually carry the name of Jesus before governors, kings, and even Caesar. The Lord stood by His apostle and strengthened him so that through him "the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it" (2 Tim. 4:17). As we hear the last report of Paul's whereabouts in Scripture, he is preaching the Word. Under house arrest in Rome and facing trial before Caesar, Paul is "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (Acts 28:31).

As witnesses we are always on call. The apostle Peter tells us not to fear those who wish to harm us. We must always be prepared to present our case to anyone who might ask about the hope that is ours in Christ. We are, however, to do this "with gentleness and respect" and with a good conscience (1 Pet. 3:15-16). Good behavior and charitable deeds in and of themselves are not a proclamation of the Gospel message, but such actions support our witness and gain a hearing for the Word. The mercy of Christ Jesus takes on flesh in the mercy that we show to those who hear the good news. James challenges us, "Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18). We are even told to feed a hungry enemy and give drink to a thirsty foe. In so doing, we will "heap burning coals on his head" and overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:20-21).

Discuss circumstances in which charitable works might support the proclamation of the Gospel. Read Acts 3. How might works of mercy gain a hearing for the Word and allow suffering people to hear the Gospel?

Our response to hostility includes the proclamation of the Word, but it is not an excuse to begin constructing our own crosses. The apostle Peter comments, "For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil" (1 Peter 3:17). In this we follow Jesus Christ, the faithful witness. Innocent of all sin, He suffered for us, "the righteous for the unrighteous." Enduring and overcoming all hostility, He Himself did what He would then command of us. Jesus, risen from the dead, "went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison," declaring His triumph over the ancient enemy who wars against the Word (1 Pet. 3:19). Baptized into Christ, we follow our Lord through death into life (Rom. 6:3-4), proclaiming the good news of His victory to people still imprisoned in the darkness of sin.

We are more than conquerors! Read Romans 8:31-39. Which of these verses speak directly to our response to persecution and hostility? Which verses speak of our proclamation? Which speak of victory, comfort, or hope?

instruction, and comfort." Christopher Boyd Brown, *Singing the Gospel: Lutheran Hymns and the Success of the Reformation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 171.

Commenting on John 15, Martin Luther writes that God permits the devil and the world to hound "every Christian on His vine" with external and internal persecutions. In this way, God "purifies and trims the branches, to make them stronger and better. All this is done that they may bear more fruit; that their faith may assert itself more and more and, by reason of trials, may become sure and strong; that they may praise God all the more, pray, preach, and confess. Then the Word and its power will increase everywhere. This applies both to the believers, who themselves become stronger in faith and in knowledge and to many others, who are to be brought to faith by them."³⁰

Jesus, the true Vine, tells us, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples" (John 15:7-8). Abiding in the Word, we ask the Lord to defend us against the persecution of Satan and the world. We must also pray that we will faithfully proclaim the Word in the face of hostility and that the seed of the Word will bear fruit: "Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful. He will establish and guard you against the evil one" (2 Thess. 3:1-3).

Responsive Reading . . . Psalm 71

³⁰ Martin Luther, Commentary on John 15:2, *Luther's Works*, vol. 24, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 209.

Session 5:

"Is It Lawful?" (Acts 22:25)

Responding According to Our Rights as Citizens

In a letter addressed to the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense, retired military chaplains wrote: "Put most simply, if the government normalizes homosexual behavior in the armed forces, many (if not most) chaplains will confront a profoundly difficult moral choice: whether they are to obey God or to obey men. This forced choice must be faced, since orthodox Christianity—which represents a significant percentage of religious belief in the armed forces—does not affirm homosexual behavior."³¹

"The annual report released by the Oregon Public Health Division indicates 71 Oregonians died in 2013 after obtaining lethal medication to end their lives . . . The total known assisted suicides in Oregon stands at 752 deaths."³²

"A report released by the Charlotte Lozier Institute finds that the United States is one of only seven countries in the world to allow abortion past 20 weeks." The other countries permitting elective abortions after 20 weeks are Canada, China, North Korea, the Netherlands, Singapore and Vietnam.³³

In *Marriage and Religious Freedom: Fundamental Goods That Stand or Fall Together*, an Open Letter from Religious Leaders in the United States to All Americans, the authors state that "the most urgent peril is this: forcing or pressuring both individuals and religious organizations—throughout their operations, well beyond religious ceremonies—to treat same-sex sexual conduct as the moral equivalent of marital sexual conduct. There is no doubt that the many people and groups whose moral and religious convictions forbid same-sex sexual conduct will resist the compulsion of the law, and church-state conflicts will result."³⁴

How are moral issues such as those described above evidence of hostility against the Word? How might circumstances such as the above indicate rising hostility? How are such issues a threat to religious liberty?

According to a report by Open Doors International, the rapid rise of religious persecution in the Central African Republic in 2013 illustrates the overall increase of persecution in "failed states," which Open Doors defines as weak states "where social and political structures have collapsed to the point where government has little or no control." An officer with Open Doors comments that the report shows "the

³¹ Letter of April 28, 2010, 1-2. Chaplains of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod were among those who signed this letter. The chaplains' letter does not imply that the matter of same-sex relationships is itself a difficult moral question—Scripture's condemnation is explicit. The "difficult moral choice" indicated is that of determining the particular instances in which obedience to God requires disobedience to human authorities. The chaplains' letter is available at <http://oldsite.alliancedefensefund.org/userdocs/DADTLetter.pdf>.

³² *Life News* (March 2014), <http://www.lutheransforlife.org/media/life-news/>. Media coverage of the decision of brain cancer patient Brittany Maynard to end her own life (on November 1, 2014) brought national attention to the topic of assisted suicide. LCMS Director of Life and Health Ministries Maggie Karner, also suffering from brain cancer, brought a personal message of life and hope to the debate. See video commentary by Brittany and Maggie at <http://www.cnn.com/2014/11/03/us/brittany-maynard-suicide-folio>.

³³ *Life News* (April 2014), <http://www.lutheransforlife.org/media/life-news/>.

³⁴ *Marriage and Religious Freedom: Fundamental Goods That Stand or Fall Together*, an Open Letter from Religious Leaders in the United States to All Americans (January 12, 2012), 1. President Matthew Harrison of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was one of the religious leaders who signed this letter. The letter is available at <http://lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=726&DocID=1620>.

importance of a stable state as a guardian of religious liberty.³⁵ Whatever political views might be evoked by that statement, a stable government may—at least in comparison with a failed state—provide a measure of freedom from persecution. Even the most stable government, however, is not a guarantee of religious freedom. The Lord Jesus, the apostles, and the earliest Christians lived in first century Palestine, a conquered territory occupied by the forces of the Roman Empire. Proud of its enforced “peace,” the empire might have considered itself a stable state and, during the early centuries of the Church, Christians did enjoy periods of peace within the Roman Empire. Yet living under the “peace of Rome” they also endured waves of persecution at the hands of citizens or government officials.

At creation God commanded the people He made to subdue the earth and have dominion over it (Gen. 1:28). He put His creation in their hands to keep and manage—and to govern: “The heavens are the LORD’s heavens, but the earth he has given to the children of man” (Ps. 115:16). With the fall into sin, that management became subject to corruption and selfish ambition. While human dominion may often be exercised with justice and mercy in governments that enjoy varying levels of stability, states will always fail. All earthly governments, stable or failed, owe their existence and authority to God. The apostles Peter and Paul most likely suffered martyrdom under Nero, an emperor known for his personal instability. Yet believers owed to the emperor, for the Lord’s sake, honor and obedience. Paul wrote, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment” (Rom. 13:1-2). Peter said, “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good . . . Fear God. Honor the emperor” (1 Pet. 2:13-14, 17).

Read Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17. What details do these passages reveal about governments and their authority? How might these verses help us in responding to persecution and hostility against the Church?

Whatever illusions they may have about the source of their own power, even unbelieving rulers receive their authority from the hand of God. Christian and pagan kings alike are subject to the King of kings. King Darius the Mede, distressed because his faithful servant Daniel was condemned to death by the king’s own decree, “labored till the sun went down to rescue him” (Dan. 6:14). Darius spent the night fasting, no doubt hoping that the lions in the den with Daniel were doing the same. Impressed with the God who saved Daniel, Darius commanded his people “to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel” (Dan. 6:26). God called the Persian king Cyrus “my shepherd,” the one who “shall fulfill all my purpose” (Is. 44:28) and says of him, “I equip you, though you do not know me” (Is. 45:5). Under God’s direction, Cyrus permitted the exiled Israelites to return to their land and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. When the fullness of time had come, a decree of Caesar Augustus was instrumental in the fulfillment of the prophecy that from Bethlehem would come forth the “ruler of Israel” (Micah 5:2). The Lord told the apostle Paul, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome” (Acts 23:11). Then, directing the efforts of various Roman tribunes, governors, centurions, and the Roman legal system, God brought Paul safely to Rome, where His apostle and ambassador would testify before Caesar.

Stable governments, as opposed to failed states, often grant basic rights to their citizens, including the freedom of worship. As Christian citizens, we may make use of these rights—wherever and whenever we have them—to demonstrate love for our neighbor and extend the kingdom of God through the proclamation of the Gospel. The apostle Paul, although a Jew, was born a citizen of the Roman Empire.

³⁵ Katherine Burgess, “Aiming for ‘Effective Anger’: The Top 50 Countries Where It’s Hardest to Be a Christian,” *Christianity Today*, January 8, 2014, at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2014/january/50-countries-where-hardest-to-be-christian-world-watch-list.html?paging=off>.

On a number of occasions the apostle employed his citizenship rights in the service of Christ and the Gospel—and to his own advantage. Unjustly beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, Paul and Silas refused to depart quietly when the magistrates decided to let them go. Paul responded: “They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out” (Acts 16:37). The frightened authorities apologized and released the two missionaries, a small victory that may well have encouraged the local believers.

Arrested in Jerusalem, Paul used his citizenship rights to escape a flogging and, in the process, thoroughly frighten a Roman tribune. Tied up to be beaten, Paul asked, “Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?” (Acts 22:25) It was not lawful, and Paul, although still a prisoner, was treated with greater respect and received frequent opportunities to speak in his own defense and in defense of the Gospel. Finally, Paul appealed to Caesar, and the Roman governor Festus replied, “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go” (Acts 25:10-12). Paul’s citizenship rights extended only so far, and in Rome he was “an ambassador in chains” (Eph. 6:20). Still, he was able to describe the way in which even his chains served the cause of Christ: “I want you to know brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ” (Phil. 1:12-13).

When and where we enjoy the liberty provided by a stable government, we may, like Paul, employ our rights as citizens in the cause of the Gospel, in public proclamation, private witness, and service to our neighbor. Martin Luther wrote:

Since a true Christian lives and labors on earth not for himself alone but for his neighbor, he does by the very nature of his spirit even what he himself has no need of, but is needful and useful to his neighbor. Because the sword is most beneficial and necessary for the whole world in order to preserve peace, punish sin, and restrain the wicked, the Christian submits most willingly to the rule of the sword, pays his taxes, honors those in authority, serves, helps, and does all he can to assist the governing authority, that it may continue to function and be held in honor and fear. Although he has no need of these things for himself—to him they are not essential—nevertheless, he concerns himself about what is serviceable and of benefit to others, as Paul teaches in Ephesians 5 [21-6:9].³⁶

God told the exiled Israelites, “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer. 29:7). We, too, as citizens should seek the welfare of the “city” in which the Lord has placed us, through prayer, in public speech or political activity where appropriate, and as our faith finds expression in discussing our opinions and ideas. We have freedom of speech, assembly, and religion. We may vote, petition for new legislation or protest existing legislation, serve on juries or in public office, and seek help and protection through the legal system. As individual citizens, Christians “help to shape the content and activity of the ‘market place.’ That is to say, they make known their own views in community discussion and activity with a view to influencing public opinion in such a way as to reflect a concern for the application of moral principle to political issues. They do so on the conviction that only where the political climate is infused with ethical standards can justice and freedom be preserved and extended.”³⁷

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4. How can the stability of the state (those “in high positions”) help advance God’s intention that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth? How might you be able to use

³⁶ Martin Luther, *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* (1523), *Luther’s Works*, vol. 45, ed. Walther I. Brandt (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), 94.

³⁷ *Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship*, Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (1968), 4.

your citizenship rights in service to your neighbor? How, for example, might the legal or political systems be used for the benefit of others? When do you have opportunities to influence “public opinion,” whether publicly or privately? Is there a line to be drawn between your faith and witness for Christ and your particular political views and, if so, where do you draw that line? What should we ask in prayer on behalf of our government?

Individuals often give public expression to their opinions. At certain times the church as an organization may choose to speak publicly on issues of particular importance that are addressed in God’s Word. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has chosen to speak “regarding issues that it deemed to be of critical importance for the church’s life and work, its witness, or its own moral responsibility (as church) to seek and promote the welfare of the state and its citizens.”³⁸ The Synod has spoken against racial discrimination and abortion, supported the traditional definition of marriage, and addressed issues of immigration and religious liberty.³⁹

Even the most stable state may at some point, while not becoming a failed state, lose some of its stability or perhaps fail to defend the religious liberty of its people. A Christian may be called upon, in good conscience, to disobey laws that violate the command of God, as the disciples did when forbidden to preach in the name of Christ (Acts 5:29). Such “civic disobedience consists of violating a specific law in the interest of justice and freedom, particularly as these relate to the needs of others. Such disobedience is a responsible expression of citizenship when it is undertaken after all other means of obtaining justice have been exhausted and in full awareness of the demonic and disruptive forces present in any given social order.”⁴⁰ Hostility and persecution may follow a decision of civic disobedience. Christians who choose to obey the command of God rather than a civil law must be willing “to accept as a part of their crossbearing the punitive consequences of their action (Dan. 6; Acts 5:29; Matt. 5:11-12).”⁴¹

To what current issues should the church speak? How might the responsibility of the individual Christian differ from the responsibility of the church as a corporate body? In what particular issues might civil disobedience become a more serious option or even a necessity in our nation, either now or in the future? Is such disobedience an example of constructing our own crosses?

Although there are a variety of ways in which we might choose to be politically active, a more critical task lies before us. The Lord Jesus commanded us to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name to all nations, including our own. As Paul told Timothy, the Word must be preached “in season and out of season” because the time is coming “when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from the truth and wander off into myths” (2 Tim. 4:2-4). The proclamation of the Gospel, even in the face of hostility against the Word, will influence our nation and our world and, by God’s grace, turn people away from myths to the truth of Christ. The Lutheran theologian Carl Mundingher expressed the way in which this influence is accomplished:

Keeping strictly within her sphere, the Church must put forth every effort that the nation within whose boundaries she exists become more and more permeated with the principles of social life laid down in the Word of God, the principles of righteousness, of justice, of tolerance and forbearance, of mutual helpfulness and co-operation.

³⁸ *Render Unto Caesar . . . and Unto God: A Lutheran View of Church and State*, Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (1995), 82.

³⁹ Links to reports of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations concerning marriage, abortion, immigration, and other issues are found in the list of resources at the end of this study.

⁴⁰ *Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship*, 6.

⁴¹ *Civil Obedience and Disobedience*, Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (1966), 5.

She must do this not by futile efforts to control legislation or to direct the administration of government, but by laboring patiently and persistently to increase the number of those within the nation whose hearts have been regenerated by the Spirit of God and whose lives are directed by that Spirit. Not by invading political assemblies, but by entering the pulpit with an emphatic and convincing proclamation of the whole Gospel of Christ can the Church make a real contribution to the political well-being of our nation.⁴²

We enjoy the blessings of freedom in our nation, but in Christ we enjoy a greater and eternal freedom, a freedom with purpose: “Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor” (1 Pet. 2:16-17).

Responsive Reading . . . Psalm 94

⁴² *Render Unto Caesar . . . and Unto God: A Lutheran View of Church and State*, 74. The Mundingher quote is taken from “Dangers Confronting the Church Today,” *The Abiding Word*, ed. Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), 1:503-504.

Session 6:
Fear Not, I Am . . . the Living One” (Rev. 1:17-18)
Suffering, the Cross, and the Empty Tomb

About 50 years after the great fire of Rome in A. D. 64, the Roman historian Tacitus described the arrest of Christians blamed for the disaster. Many Romans did not necessarily think the Christians actually started the fire; according to popular opinion, the Emperor Nero was to blame. It was believed, however, that the Christian faith was a destructive superstition because Christians refused to acknowledge and worship the gods of Rome. The Christian “crime” was a social one, as Tacitus records in his *Annals*: “Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who confessed; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of arson, as of hatred of the human race. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths.”⁴³

Some opponents of the Christian faith today express agreement with the ancient accusation of “hatred of the human race.” Atheist author Sam Harris says of all religions, including Christianity: “We have been slow to recognize the degree to which religious faith perpetuates man’s inhumanity to man.”⁴⁴ Humanist author Hemant Mehta writes: “Do Christians do some good things? Yes. Absolutely. But I can’t focus on that when so many Christians are to blame for some major social injustices that I witness on a regular basis.”⁴⁵ Surveys indicate that some non-Christians perceive Christians as “judgmental, bigoted, sheltered, right-wingers, hypocritical, insincere, and uncaring. Outsiders say [Christians’] hostility toward gays—not just opposition to homosexual politics and behaviors but disdain for gay individuals—has become virtually synonymous with the Christian faith.”⁴⁶

Certainly we as Christians have not always lived up to our Lord’s call to love one another. It is sadly and terribly true that throughout history Christians have at times persecuted both fellow believers and unbelievers. We have much for which we must repent. Yet the world may also magnify the failings of Christians and even advance false accusations. Commenting on the hatred of the world that bears false witness against believers, Martin Luther wrote: “Wherever there are upright preachers and Christians, they must endure having the world call them heretics, apostates, even seditious and desperate scoundrels. Moreover, the Word of God must undergo the most shameful and spiteful persecution and blasphemy; it is the blind world’s nature to condemn and persecute the truth and the children of God and yet consider this no sin.”⁴⁷

What similar accusations have you heard or experienced? How do the above accusations, Roman and contemporary, provide evidence of Satan’s hostility toward the Word?

Jesus our Cornerstone is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” He built His Church on that rock-solid confession of truth, promising that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:16-18). Satan, for all of his hostility against the Word, cannot prevail against the Church, but generation upon generation

⁴³ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 556. “Popular rumor suggested that Christians were cannibals (based perhaps on a misunderstanding of the Lord’s Supper), atheists (like the Jews, Christians had no images in their shrines) and incestuous (their ‘love’ for one another was well known).” Tim Dowley, ed., *Introduction to the History of Christianity*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 83.

⁴⁴ Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2005), 15.

⁴⁵ Hemant Mehta, “Why do Atheists Target Christians?” *Humanist Network News*, December 15, 2010, www.americanhumanist.org. The “major social injustices” to which Mehta refers include preventing children from learning about birth control and “safe sex,” opposition to gay marriage and to a woman’s right to choose abortion, and to the indoctrination of Christian children in religious beliefs.

⁴⁶ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, ed., *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity . . . And Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 92.

⁴⁷ Martin Luther, *Large Catechism, The Book of Concord*, 421-262. See also 1 Corinthians 1:18.

after Eden and centuries after Tacitus’ accusation, the ancient serpent still makes every attempt to do just that. Persecution against Christ’s Body continues. The hostility may take shape as accusations of bigotry and intolerance, or in shame, ridicule, and the loss of religious liberty. It may be expressed in more harmful and deadly ways—in the loss of home and family, imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom.

How should Christians respond to persecution and hostility? With the early disciples we may rejoice to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus and forgive our enemies as Jesus asked forgiveness for those who crucified Him. Like saints of old, we can turn to the Lord in prayer, remaining faithful to the Word and using every opportunity to witness to our hope in Christ. When possible, we can take advantage of our rights as citizens, making every effort to preserve and protect our religious liberty as we proclaim the good news of salvation and serve others in Jesus’ name. Yet, when all else is said and done, one response still remains. The Body of Christ *suffers*.

Although admittedly our persecutors have little trouble finding us, how is the Body of Christ recognized in the world? Church buildings are recognized by the crosses that decorate them, and persecutors delight in tearing those crosses down.⁴⁸ Christians themselves are marked more deeply. According to Luther, seven signs or marks identify the people of God, the Body of Christ on earth. These marks include the possession of the Word of God, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper (with the Sacraments taught, believed, and administered according to Christ’s command), the public exercise of the Office of the Keys (the forgiveness of sins or the withholding of forgiveness in the case of unrepentant sinners; John 20:23), the calling of ministers, and public prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. Along with these six signs, there is one more distinguishing mark: “Seventh, the holy Christian people are externally recognized by the holy possession of the sacred cross. They must endure every misfortune and persecution, all kinds of trials and evil from the devil, the world, and the flesh (as the Lord’s Prayer indicates) by inward sadness, timidity, fear, outward poverty, contempt, illness, and weakness, in order to become like their head, Christ. And the only reason they must suffer is that they steadfastly adhere to Christ and God’s Word, enduring this for the sake of Christ, Matthew 5 [1:11], ‘Blessed are you when men persecute you on my account.’”⁴⁹

The risen Savior told His astonished disciples: “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see” (Luke 24:39). Just as the crucified and risen Lord was identified and recognized by the marks of the nails and spear, His Body, the Church, is recognized by the mark of suffering and the cross. Jesus, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross and despised the shame (Heb. 12:2) and He calls us to do the same: “You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you will be put to death. You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives” (Luke 21:16-19). The apostle Paul tells us not to lose heart, and in inspired understatement describes the suffering we endure as a “light momentary affliction” that is “preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen” (2 Cor. 4:17-18; see also Rom. 8:18).

Things yet unseen, bodily resurrection and eternal glory, will be ours in Christ, but the cross comes first. “The blood of Christians is seed” and persecution is often followed by increase to the Church. Suffering also strengthens us as we are conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom. 8:29). We “rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” and “rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because

⁴⁸ In Iraqi Christian villages, ISIS militants have taken down crosses and burned church manuscripts. Kate Tracy, “Islamic State Seizes Iraq’s Christian Capital: Qaraqosh,” *Christianity Today*, Gleanings, posted August 7, 2014 at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2014/august/islamic-state-seizes-iraqs-christian-capital-qaraqosh-isis.html>.

⁴⁹ Martin Luther, *On the Councils and the Church* (1539), *Luther’s Works*, vol. 41, ed. Eric W. Gritsch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 165.

God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom. 5:2-5). Luther commented on the way in which suffering strengthens God’s people: “Since we know then that it is God’s good pleasure that we should suffer, and that God’s glory is manifested in our suffering, better than in any other way, and since we are the kind of people who cannot hold on to the Word and our faith without suffering, and moreover since we have the noble, previous [sic] promise that the cross which God sends to us is not a bad thing, but rather an utterly precious and noble holy thing, why should we not be bold to suffer?”⁵⁰ Paul, content—pleased—with weakness and persecution could boast: “For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10).

Read Hebrews 10:32-39 and 1 Corinthians 12:26. *According to these verses, how should we react to persecution and suffering, our own and that of others? What attitudes mark our response? How might these attitudes inform our prayers for our fellow saints and for ourselves as we bear the cross?*

We bear the cross as our vocation, our calling, following in the footsteps of Christ, who suffered for us (1 Peter 2:21). We bear the cross in hope because our Lord, through His suffering, death, and resurrection, has conquered. By God’s grace through faith in our risen Savior, His victory is ours. Satan was against us, but “he knows that his time is short” (Rev. 12:12). Our enemy and accuser, who is behind every accusation of “social injustice” or “hatred of the human race,” who tries endlessly to turn us from the Word, has fallen in defeat: “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come; for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death” (Rev. 12:10-11). As the Body of Christ we continue to suffer hostility, accusations, and even death, but our hope is in Christ our Head who suffered all of these things and by His resurrection overcame them all. This rich mystery, Paul writes, “is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

Ascended to the right hand of the Father, Jesus reigns in glory until His return on the Last Day, when “the last enemy,” death, will finally be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26). On that day we will be raised bodily from our graves as Jesus was raised, to live and reign with Him forever. As we “walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” we fear no evil because our Shepherd has walked there before us and walks with us now. We are “regarded as sheep to be slaughtered” and yet “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom. 8:36-37). Because of the victory that is already ours, Luther could mock the futile threats of his enemies: “It is a shame and disgrace to try to threaten and terrify Christ and his Christians with death for, after all, they are lords and victors over death. It is just like trying to frighten a man by bridling and saddling his horse and bidding him to ride on it.”⁵¹

Read 1 Peter 5:6-11. *What instruction for enduring persecution do you find here? How does humility become an aspect of resistance? How else can you resist the “roaring lion” who wants to devour you? What particular words of hope do you find in these verses?*

While on the island of Patmos “on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus,” John heard a voice like a trumpet. There before the apostle stood “one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-

⁵⁰ Martin Luther, *Sermon at Coburg on Cross and Suffering* (1530), *Luther’s Works*, 51-208. The word “previous” in this quotation from the American Edition of *Luther’s Works* is a typographical error. The correct word is “precious,” that is, “the noble, precious promise.” In the German edition the word in question is *teure* (teuer in modern German), which means “precious” or “costly.” *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, Band 32 (Weimar: H. Bohlau, 1906), 38, available at <https://archive.org/stream/werkekriftsage32luthuoft/page/38/mode/2up>.

⁵¹ Martin Luther, *A Letter of Consolation to All Who Suffer Persecution* (1522), *Luther’s Works*, 43-63.

edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength” (Rev. 1:9-16). In the presence of such exalted majesty, John “fell at his feet as though dead” (Rev. 1:17), just as Paul had fallen to the ground when confronted by the Lord on the road to Damascus. This is the risen and reigning Lord Jesus, to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given. This is the Living One who asks, “Why are you persecuting me?” He is the King of kings and Lord of lords before whom each of us, including those who persecute us, will one day be called to account (Rom. 14:10-12). It is no wonder that Luther said we have reason to “weep and lament” for our persecutors, praying that before that great and terrible day they will come to know the truth. What awaits them is far more terrifying—eternally so—than what Paul calls the “light momentary affliction” that the cross-bearing saints now suffer.

What awaits the suffering saints is eternal joy in the presence of the Lamb. There we will stand in “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages . . . crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!’” Together with all the saints in that future scene—with Stephen, the first martyr, with the martyrs of ancient Rome, with the saints who suffer today in Iraq and across the world—we will have come out of “the great tribulation” of earthly suffering, having washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Lamb will be our Shepherd, as He always has been, and He will guide us to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes (Rev. 7:9-17).

That day is yet to come. Until then, it is “boots on the ground” in the face of the unrelenting hostility of an enemy in his death throes who continues to war against the Word. The Word he so hates is the sword in our hand: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle 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 in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm” (Eph. 6:10-13).

Read Ephesians 6:10-20. *Although it is people who persecute us, we know we “do not wrestle against flesh and blood.” How does the armor of God in all of its various parts help us to stand firm in the face of hostility and persecution?*

Years before Jesus’ revelation on Patmos, John had seen the Lord in His divine majesty on the mountain of transfiguration. Then, too, hearing a voice from heaven, the apostle fell face down to the ground in terror. But when, at the Lord’s touch, John finally raised his head, he saw no one “but Jesus only” (Matt. 17:7-8). Now again on Patmos, the exalted and ever gentle Shepherd lays His right hand on John and says, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades” (Rev. 1:17-18). The Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep securely holds His cross-bearing flock (John 10:28)—and no one can snatch them out of His hand.

Pray for Christians who are suffering, in our nation and around the world, that they might faithfully endure persecution and one day stand with all the saints in the presence of the Lamb. Pray for those who persecute them—for those who persecute us—that they may come to know and worship Jesus as Lord.

Responsive Reading . . . Psalm 46

Adopted December 13, 2014
 Commission on Theology and Church Relations
 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Resources

Information from the LCMS Office of the President on prayers for the persecuted church:
<http://blogs.lcms.org/2014/statement-on-persecution>
<http://blogs.lcms.org/2014/statement-on-christian-persecution-in-iraq>

Prayers, including “For our enemies,” “For persecuted Christians,” “For the nation,” and “In times of affliction and distress,” *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: CPH, 2006), 305-318.

The Lutheran Witness (June/July 2014), Theme: Christian Persecution
<http://www.cph.org/witness/freeissue/index.html>

Journal of Lutheran Mission 1:2 (September 2014), Theme: The Cross and Suffering
http://issuu.com/thelcms/docs/journal_of_lutheran_mission_no2_sep/1

“The Bible and Christian Citizenship,” reprint of an article from the July 1996 issue of *The Lutheran Witness*
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=359>

Reports by the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations:

The Natural Knowledge of God in Christian Confession and Christian Witness (2013)
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=2431>

Immigrants Among Us: A Lutheran Framework for Addressing Immigration Issues (2012)
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=2194>

Theology and Practice of Prayer: A Lutheran View (2011)
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=1745>

The Creator’s Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church (2009)
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=310>

Render Unto Caesar . . . And Unto God: A Lutheran View of Church and State (1995)
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=360>

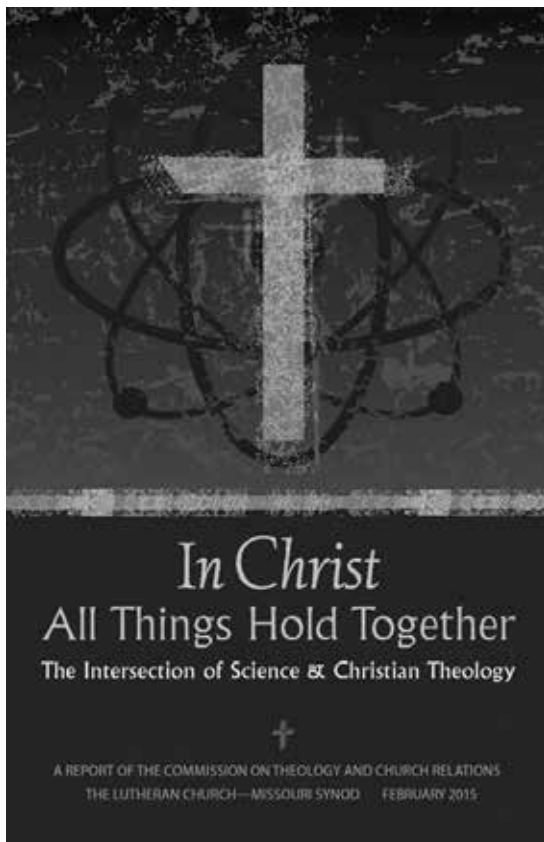
Racism and the Church (1994)
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=1052>

Christian Care at Life’s End (1993)
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=361>

Abortion in Perspective (1984)
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=363>

Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship (1968)
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=366>

Civil Obedience and Disobedience (1966)
<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=367>



The Intersection of Science and Christian Theology: Abbreviations

AC	<i>Augsburg Confession</i>
AE	<i>Luther's Works</i> . American ed. 55 vols. St. Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955–1986.
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
FC ep	Formula of Concord, Epitome
FC SD	Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration
LC	The Large Catechism

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In Christ All Things Hold Together

The Intersection of Science and Christian Theology

Introduction: The Challenge of Scientism

Contemporary Western culture is increasingly influenced by the doctrine of *scientism*. Scientism does not merely assert that empirical science is a generally reliable source of information about the natural world, a claim that is uncontroversial. Rather, scientism claims that a particular approach to science—the materialistic science which has become dominant since the Enlightenment—is the *only* way to gain knowledge.¹ While a modest empirical approach sees science as a useful, but limited instrument to be complemented by the findings of other disciplines (such as literature, philosophy and theology), scientism claims that a materialistic paradigm of investigation has a monopoly on human knowledge. The consequence is that metaphysics, religion, and even traditional ethics lose their cognitive status and appear vulnerable to replacement by more enlightened thinking.

At an institutional level, we see this in the radical disconnect between the sciences and the humanities noted by C. P. Snow in his classic work, *The Two Cultures*.² Scientists and non-scientists receive very different educations, with very little by way of overlap that would facilitate dialogue between the sciences and other disciplines. Increasingly, scientists are given a highly specialized, technical training, and have little time to ponder the broader questions of human nature and the human condition. At the same time, many students in the humanities are scientifically illiterate and easily confuse ideological claims made on behalf of science with what the science itself is saying. As a result, cultural conversations about the value and purpose of science are often unproductive, as neither sort of education produces individuals who have a good understanding of both the science and the broader moral, legal, and theological considerations necessary to guide its best use.

¹ The second definition of scientism in the current Random House Dictionary emphasizes this claim: “the belief that the assumptions, methods of research, etc. of the physical and biological sciences are equally appropriate and essential to all other disciplines, including the humanities and social sciences.” *scientism*. Dictionary.com. *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/scientism> (accessed: January 29, 2015).

² C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). This book was developed in two parts, written in 1959 (the Rede Lectures) and 1964 (“The Two Cultures: A Second Look.”). While Snow’s work on the “disconnect” noted here has typically framed this discussion, his views on the intersection of science and non-science have not gone unchallenged. The arguments in this document are not contingent on his framework.

5

Scientism exacerbates this problem as it leads people to regard literature, philosophy and religion as unverifiable relics of our pre-scientific past, sources which can no longer contribute to a serious conversation about what is really true. At a personal level, scientism is one of many factors that explain the radical privatization of faith observed by so many of the most astute Christian cultural critics.³ For Harry Blamires, the problem is that Christians have acquiesced to a one-sided treaty with secularism, according to which religious believers can retain the therapeutic benefits of belief in the supernatural within the privacy of their own minds, provided secular ideologies define public fact.

Modern secular thought ignores the reality beyond this world...

Secularism is, by its very nature, rooted in this world, accounting it the only sure basis of knowledge, the only reliable source of meaning and value... Hence the collision between the Christian faith and contemporary secular culture. For all teaching of Christian revelation deals with the breaking-in of the greater supernatural order upon our more limited finite world... Secularism is so rooted in this world that it does not allow for the existence of any other. Therefore whenever secularism encounters the Christian mind, either the Christian mind will momentarily shake that rootedness, or secularism will seduce the Christian mind to a temporary mode of converse which overlooks the supernatural.⁴

Blamires’s point is that even Christians may start to think that the supernatural is irrelevant to their daily life, so that they no longer see God’s providential hand in nature or in their work as a sacred calling to serve others made in the image of God. In this way, complains Blamires, “the Christian mind has allowed itself to be subtly secularized by giving a purely chronological status to the eternal. That is to say, the Christian has relegated the significance of the eternal to the life that succeeds this one.”⁵ Thus God is no longer seen at work in ordinary events and in each person’s vocation.

Similarly, Francis Schaeffer⁶ and Nancy Pearcey⁷ describe the splitting of the Christian mind into a structure of two levels or stories. The lower story of objective fact is controlled by materialistic science. Since religion and

³ Stephen L. Carter also points to the way the law and our political dialogue has contributed to the privatization of faith in his *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

⁴ Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1978), 67–68.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶ Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1968).

⁷ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

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transcendent moral claims cannot be investigated in this fashion, they are relegated to the upper story of private values. This upper story can only be accessed by faith, and its contents are regarded as subjective and not the sort of thing which can be known as fact. As Schaeffer said, the assumption of many in our time is that “Rationality and Faith are totally out of contact with each other.”⁸

The sad consequence for Christians in the sciences (including students, teachers and workers in the public and private sectors) is that they lose the ability to connect their faith with their work at the *cognitive* level—at the level of how they think—so that they can reasonably claim to know that the world really is as they believe it in faith to be. Thus, while they may continue to see themselves as motivated by a desire to serve their neighbor in God-pleasing ways, it is inconceivable that a biblical worldview could contribute to the framework of assumptions on which scientific *knowledge* is built. Even Christians who are not scientists are greatly affected. The contemporary, pluralized, post-Christian societies typical in the West have no clear center of cultural authority, but amid the babel of voices competing for dominance, scientism has become stronger. A proper respect for scientific rigor may be supplanted by an uncritical acceptance of claims made on behalf of science by secularists in the media and by popular science writers and philosophers with non-Christian agendas (including atheism and a more “inclusive” spirituality). For example, it is increasingly claimed that science has discovered a genetic or neurological “explanation” for religious and moral beliefs.⁹ This corrosive environment also tends to push faith inside, making it seem irrational, irrelevant to objective reality and unfit to enter public life, from which government may be only too happy to expunge its influence.

Some Christians do not have a problem with this state of affairs, as they accept the proposal of Stephen Jay Gould, according to which science and religion define non-overlapping magisteria (NOMA).¹⁰ On this view, religion concerns issues of ultimate value (telling us how to go to heaven), while science tells us how the temporal world operates (how the heavens go). However, this apparently neat division of labor denies that either natural or revealed theology tells us anything factual about the origin of the world, the nature of human beings, or the actions of God in history to save mankind. NOMA is incompatible with a comprehensive biblical worldview, according to which Christianity is a framework of “total truth” about reality. Moreover,

⁸ Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 61.

⁹ For a survey of many such views, and a thoughtful scientifically informed Christian response, see Mario Beauregard and Denyse O’Leary, *The Spiritual Brain* (New York: HarperOne, 2007).

¹⁰ See Stephen Jay Gould, *Rock of Ages: Science and Religion and the Fullness of Life* (New York: Ballantine, 1999), and his “Nonoverlapping Magisteria,” *Natural History* 106 (March 1997), 16–22, 60–62. For further discussion of NOMA and other models of relating science and religion, see chapter 3 of this report.

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NOMA betrays those Christians in the sciences who are strongly motivated to integrate the content of their Christian faith with their work as scientists. They are not content to live their lives in two tracks—a faith track of devotion and worship, and a work track in which they look at science in exactly the same way as an atheist. To be sure, the basic procedures and standards of competence in science are generally derived from reason, observation, and trial and error, not from Scripture. And there is nothing to be gained by decorating incompetent science with pious platitudes. But sincere Christian scientists¹¹ do need a way of understanding their work as an authentic calling to understand God’s world. This holistic vision of science, in which Christian scientists seek to discover what God has done in the world—in order to glorify Him and use that knowledge to serve others—reconnects the realms of fact and value, of knowledge and meaning, and helps to heal what Martin Marty has called the “modern schism”¹² in the Christian mind.

The hope that such holism can be recovered should not be dismissed as unachievable. Today, national science organizations exert a powerful influence in favor of secularist conformity. However, the history of science provides numerous examples of great scientists who integrated their Christian faith with their scientific work in profoundly illuminating ways. As Alfred North Whitehead argued in *Science and the Modern World*, it was the habitual thought forms of Christendom that made the very idea of modern science appear feasible and worthwhile.

[T]he greatest contribution of medievalism to the formation of the scientific movement [is] the inextinguishable belief that every detailed occurrence can be correlated with its antecedents in a perfectly definite manner, exemplifying general principles. Without this belief the incredible labours of scientists would be without hope. It is this instinctive conviction, vividly poised before the imagination, which is the motive power of research—that there is a secret, a secret which can be unveiled. How has this conviction been so vividly implanted on the European mind?

When we compare this tone of thought in Europe with the attitude of other civilisations when left to themselves, there seems but one source for its origin. It must come from the medieval insistence on the rationality of God, conceived as with the personal energy of Jehovah and with the rationality of a Greek philosopher. Every detail was supervised and ordered: the

¹¹ The term “Christian scientist” refers herein to a scientist who is a Christian, not to a member of the Christian Science religious group.

¹² Martin E. Marty, *The Modern Schism: Three Paths to the Secular* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012).

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search into nature could only result in the vindication of the faith in rationality.¹³

The whole idea that the cosmos is governed by universal rational laws derived from the Christian conviction that all of reality is governed by the will of a single, personal, rational creator who provides for His people, a will which cannot be anticipated by our finite, fallen reason, but must be patiently investigated by empirical means. Early modern scientists saw nature as God's other book. Galileo wrote that the book of nature "was written in the language of mathematics"¹⁴ and that "whatever we read in that book is the creation of the omnipotent Craftsman."¹⁵ Johannes Kepler concurred, going so far as to say that astronomers could learn something of God's providential plan for the world.¹⁶ Appealing to the reformers' emphasis on the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9), Kepler saw his scientific work as having devotional value, maintaining that the world was God's temple and that the scientific contemplation of nature was a form of worship.¹⁷

The contrast between the theologically motivated, faith-inspired scientific vocation of the early modern scientists and the highly specialized, secularized professionalism typical today is a sharp one. The scientism, compartmentalization, cognitive dissonance, disorientation and vocational *angst* found in many contemporary attitudes to science have deep historical roots and require a close analysis of currents in philosophy and theology. The problem of how Christian theology should best engage science is multi-dimensional, requiring close attention to a number of historical and contemporary issues.

From the perspective of the church, perhaps the most troubling feature of scientism is the way it undermines the authority of revelation. The early modern scientists did not see their reason as an autonomous source of secular knowledge about the world, but as a "natural light," a God-given minister to their faith which they employed to the glory of God and for the service of neighbor. However, during the later Enlightenment, religious claims were increasingly dismissed as "superstition." The withering attacks of David Hume, the French Encyclopedists and Higher Criticism assumed that autonomous reason was in a position to judge faith and decide which parts (if any)

¹³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: New York Free Press, 1997, first published 1925), 13.

¹⁴ Galileo Galilei, *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, trans. Stillman Drake (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 237 f.

¹⁵ Galileo Galilei, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems—Ptolemaic and Copernican*, trans. Stillman Drake (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 3.

¹⁶ Peter Barker, "Astronomy, Providence, and the Lutheran Contribution to Science," in ed. Angus Menzies, *Reading God's World: The Scientific Vocation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 175.

¹⁷ Peter Harrison, "Priests of the Most High God, with Respect to the Book of Nature: The Vocational Identity of the Early Modern Naturalist," in ed. Angus Menzies, *Reading God's World*, 70.

of it could remain.¹⁸ This approach is manifest today in the tendency of many books on the "problem" of science and religion to assume that the "solution" is to see how religion can be reinterpreted or revised to accommodate the latest scientific findings. The early modern scientists would have found it odd that God's book of nature—as interpreted by finite, fallen reason—would be taken to be authoritative over the inspired, inerrant book of God's Word.

To be sure, the fact that Scripture is supreme in its authority, and the only source and norm for orthodox Christian doctrine, does not mean we are always correct in interpreting Scripture. So it can seem (and may sometimes be) reasonable to consider whether some alternative ways of reading Scripture might make it easier to accept some apparently well-confirmed claim of science. Yet there are dangers here all the same. One of these is the unstated assumption that the best science is on the same level as the Word of God. The problem is that God's Word has an eternal and ultimate validity, while even the best scientific theories are the products of finite, fallen minds and have at most a temporal and penultimate status. A marriage between the eternal Word of God and temporal science is apt to produce a widow as the science changes. And it may also create the false impressions that the Word of God changes with the times, or that science is the arbiter of ultimate truth. In this way, science may supplant Scripture as the source and norm for Christian doctrine and life. When this happens, the church must stand on the Word of God, whatever reaction this may provoke.¹⁹

The church cannot simply baptize the latest findings of science "Christian," accommodating its teaching to the times. Yet neither does it need to adopt a separatist posture that discourages young people from entering science and which has the unappealing appearance of censoring sources of secular information. A lasting synthesis of penultimate science and ultimate truth cannot be had, because the things of this world are passing away, but only God remains eternally the same. Nor is it wise to follow the Reformed approach of "transforming," "redeeming," or "Christianizing" science, as if we can convert the penultimate into the ultimate. A better approach, and one more consonant with Lutheran theology, is to encourage an ongoing dialogue between Scripture and scientific theories that critically evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the latter, avoiding both uncritical embrace and uncritical dismissal.²⁰ It is because we have one foot in eternity that we are free to dialog with any of the world's scientific ideas, appreciating their value in serving our

¹⁸ See chapter 2 of this report for a more in-depth account of these secularizing influences.

¹⁹ See chapter 4 of this report for more on the best approach to interpreting scriptural passages with apparent scientific import.

²⁰ See the discussion of Christ and culture using H. Richard Niebuhr's typologies in chapter 1, pages 28 ff.

neighbor while critiquing any ideologies smuggled along with them.²¹ We can see manmade theories as, at best, penultimate shadows and anticipations of the eternal and necessary Word of God, and at worst, as idolatrous traps which provide comfort to those who wish to live as if there is no God. We do not seek a final answer in science, or anywhere else in the space of human ideology. Yet we do maintain that it is in Christ that all things, including the world and the scientist, hold together (Col. 1:17).

The supreme authority of Scripture matters, not merely for its own sake, but also because it is where God's action to save mankind—the Gospel—is disclosed. A second danger of the assumption that Scripture should simply be re-interpreted in light of modern science is that, in some cases, it may (perhaps indirectly and inadvertently) undermine the Gospel. Of grave concern here are well-meaning attempts to harmonize the early chapters of Genesis with some version of evolutionary theory. It is not merely that these efforts seem to make incorrect claims about the Genesis text itself. They also appear to undermine later Pauline explanations of how sin and death entered the world, and how, therefore, humans were rescued from their predicament by the work of Christ.²² It seems that the magisterial use of reason combined with an impatient desire to solve apparent conflicts between science and religion by developing a "patch" for Genesis may subvert the Christological core of the Scripture—the hermeneutical equivalent of killing the patient by suppressing a troubling symptom.

It is not only in the right-hand kingdom, but also in the kingdom of the left²³ that the implications of scientism are felt. For example, materialistic science rejects the Christian claims that human beings are specially made in the image of God, and specially redeemed by the saving acts of the God-man, Jesus Christ. Consistent with his Darwinian materialism, Peter Singer declares that it is "speciesism" (analogous to racism or sexism) to suppose that there is anything of unique value about human beings.²⁴ Singer wrote in 1979 that "Human babies are not born self-aware, or capable of grasping that they exist over time. They are not persons," and concluded that "the life of a newborn is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee."²⁵

²¹ An excellent exposition of this approach is Gene Edward Veith, *Loving God With All Your Mind: Thinking as a Christian in the Postmodern World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003).

²² On this topic, see the penetrating critique of the theological implications of theistic evolution in Norman C. Nevin, ed., *Should Christians Embrace Evolution? Biblical and Scientific Responses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011).

²³ In simplest terms, the "right-hand kingdom" refers to the realm of the church (God's kingdom of grace), where God works through His means of grace (Word and Sacraments) to create and sustain faith in Christ, while the "left-hand kingdom" refers to the realm of secular government and society (God's kingdom of power), where God works to provide and promote order through earthly rulers, structures, means, and institutions.

²⁴ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Ecco Books, 2002; first published 1975).

²⁵ Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 122–23.

Once human value is grounded in natural capacities (whether physical, psychological or sociological), it is clear that some humans will be more valuable than others, and some humans may be disposed of to maximize the welfare of those that remain. The result of this line of thought is that the idea of universal, inalienable rights for all humans can no longer be sustained.²⁶ The weak, the vulnerable and the despised may lose their protection. In the face of this threat, the church must confidently proclaim, teach and defend the scriptural basis for human dignity and worth. It must speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves (Prov. 31:8). The church will be greatly assisted in this effort by the support of articulate pro-life scientists, whose authority the culture recognizes.

There is something of a renaissance of apologetics both inside and outside The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), and this is a great opportunity to forge alliances between theologians, scientists, philosophers, and professional apologists in our church for the sake of defending the faith. While the Word of God has its own authority independent of reason, scientific apologetics can play an important role in creating the intellectual and cultural space that allows the Gospel a fair hearing. To be sure, reason cannot produce faith. But it can clear away misconceptions and refute erroneous worldviews that lead people to reject the Christian claim out of hand. Christian scientists and philosophers can help here by marshaling evidence that this is a created world and that human beings are a special part of it. This task has become more important because of the rise of the New Atheism, which seeks to use materialistic science to discredit revealed religion.

This report will provide guidance and encouragement to a number of constituencies who seek to combat scientism and recover the sense of science as a vocation which glorifies God and provides beneficial services to the neighbor. These constituencies include:

- (1) Students, teachers and investigators in the sciences;
- (2) Pastors and other church workers who minister to those involved in the sciences in regular congregations and in campus ministry;
- (3) Administrators and teachers at Christian high schools and universities who would like input to help them think through the hard task of integrating the Christian faith with science education;
- (4) Non-scientific Christian laity whose faith is being attacked as an unscientific relic of the past.

This last group is by no means the least significant, as the authority of science is being used as a cultural weapon and non-scientists are often ill-equipped to defend themselves. As C. S. Lewis wrote in his famous essay, "On

²⁶ For discussion, see Angus J. L. Menzies, "Why Human Rights Cannot Be Naturalized" in *Legitimizing Human Rights: Secular and Religious Perspectives*, ed. Angus J. L. Menzies (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013).

Learning in War-Time," Christian intellectuals have a special responsibility here:

To be ignorant and simple now—not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground—would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen.²⁷

So the goal of this report is to encourage more informed discussion and dialogue between all parties, those with a science background and those without it, so that the Church is better equipped both to respond to challenges and to encourage more young Christians to pursue scientific vocations.

An overview of the report

This report aims to serve as a constructive resource for thoughtful Christian reflection on the complex questions arising from the intersection of science, faith and Christian theology. Each of its five chapters provides conceptual tools and examples that should aid Christians in forming a faithful response to these questions and, it is hoped, will encourage more young people to pursue scientific careers in full knowledge of the nature and significance of the scientific vocation.

The opening chapter seeks to lay out the rich theological resources for understanding the nature and purpose of science. Since science is a pre-eminent application of human reason, and faithful Christian scientists are also called to reverence God's Word, the chapter begins with a discussion of the authority of Scripture and the proper role of reason. The argument is made that in science and elsewhere, reason should serve as a servant of Christian faith, rather than as a judge of it. The chapter moves to a consideration of how God's two books—the book of Scripture and the book of nature—relate to one another. How do we give both books their due, while recognizing the supreme authority of Scripture? Next, we explore the implications of the doctrines of vocation and of the two kingdoms for science. This leads naturally into a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of various models for Christian engagement with culture, and their implications for the work of a scientist. The advantages of a "dialog" model over conflicting alternatives are presented. Then we consider what it means to look at nature in a Christocentric way, and reflect on the implications of image of God theology and other elements of Christian anthropology for the scientific task. The chapter concludes by considering the many theological assumptions that encouraged and guided the rise of modern science.

²⁷ C. S. Lewis, "Learning in War-Time," in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 27–28.

Chapter 1 shows such a close and positive connection between Christian theology and good science that it is important to explain why that connection is not widely appreciated today. So chapter 2 focuses on the historical factors leading to the contemporary perception that faith and theology have nothing to do with scientific practice. That sad story begins with the attack on final causes (purpose, design) in nature and the related decline of natural theology. While natural theology may sometimes have gone too far by reading design into nature that was not there, modern science has largely rejected design as a valid scientific category, which prevents the scientist from ever inferring that we inhabit a created world. This transition was encouraged by the rise of two main ideas: the idea of autonomous reason (reason that no longer was seen as a servant of the faith), and the idea of nature as an autonomous machine, running on by itself, with no need for God. In this intellectual atmosphere, many thinkers moved from orthodox Christianity to deism and even naturalism, the atheistic view that nature alone exists. Soon it seemed to many that materialistic science alone provided reliable knowledge, while theology, philosophy and ethics were all treated with suspicion. Side by side with these ideological changes, science changed as a social institution. While science had been understood as a vocation of reading the book of nature, it was reconceived as a modern profession with a methodology that excluded God's work from a scientific understanding of nature. The fallout of these momentous changes is seen in the unbiblical view of reality prevalent among many young American Christians, the so-called "moralistic therapeutic deism"²⁸ which keeps God distant from the natural world and our lives, undermining the idea that science is a vocation.

Chapter 2 is a sobering portrayal of how different our intellectual world today is from the era and thought-world of the scientific revolution, in which faithful Christian scientists self-consciously applied theology to their work and found God present everywhere in the world. Chapter 3 provides a constructive response to the philosophical assumptions of our contemporary perspective. It explains the philosophical basis of scientism and how its arguments may be refuted. More positively, several reasons are given for thinking that Christianity provides a superior foundation for science than naturalism: Christian teaching explains why science is feasible, gives scientists the right balance of confidence and humility, restores a sense of meaning in scientific work, explains the reliability of the human mind that is presupposed by science, and provides a strong moral motivation for going into science.

A more difficult and specialized question is how Christians should read specific portions of Scripture with apparent scientific import. This is the topic of chapter 4, which sets out several Lutheran principles of interpretation and

²⁸ Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

applies them to a number of examples. In the process, advice is given on how to find the right balance between respect for God's Word and humility in the sometimes difficult task of rightly interpreting it. In particular, the chapter considers how best to avoid two extremes: creating unnecessary conflicts between science and Scripture, and slavishly accommodating Scripture to the latest scientific fads. The overarching goal must be to see Christ in the Scripture and to so read it that the saving message of the Gospel is always at the center.

Finally, the last chapter offers some guidance and practical applications and promotes further discussion for several vocational groups. How should Christian students of science respond to ideas that create challenges for their faith? How might Christian teachers present controversial ideas in the most constructive fashion? What factors may help Christian scientific investigators themselves to retain a strong sense of vocation and to integrate their faith with their work? And how should non-scientific Christian laity respond to the many claims made on behalf of science, some of which go far beyond what the data are saying? In each case, examples are given that may provide models for subsequent discussion. Let us pray that the ensuing conversations aid all of us in seeing that it is in Christ that all things hold together.

Chapter I

Theological Foundations

1. Introduction

Science and Christian Theology both present themselves as sources of knowledge. Fundamentally, questions about knowledge—epistemological questions²⁹—are questions of authority. Do we think that observation and reason are the most authoritative sources for reliable belief? Or do we accept that Scripture is the final word? If science appears to conflict with the Bible, how do we adjudicate the dispute? To answer these questions, we must first consider the authority of Scripture and the proper role of reason, including scientific reason,³⁰ for a Christian believer (section 2). Next, a closely related question concerns the best way to relate nature and the Bible. Going back at least as far as Augustine (354–430), it has been common for theologians to say that God has revealed Himself in two books, the book of God's Word (Scripture, or special revelation), and the book of nature (creation, or general revelation).³¹ Are these two sources equally authoritative or does one source take precedence over the other? If the latter, does that allow due respect for the contributions of the subordinate source? It is important to think through how the two books interrelate (section 3).

Once these foundational epistemological issues have been addressed, we can consider their implications for the life of the Christian scientist, for the relationship between Christianity and culture, for the nature of creation, and for the nature of humanity. What does it mean to see science as a vocation, and not merely a profession (section 4)? If we consider the various models

²⁹ Epistemology means "theory of knowledge." It is both an established branch of philosophy and a critical element of the methodology of many disciplines, including science and theology. Both of the latter disciplines make knowledge claims and address the question, "How can we know?"

³⁰ Scientific reason adds to standard reason principles of empirical investigation, such as the inductive method and procedures for testing scientific theories against the data and each other.

³¹ Rebutting the Manicheans and arguing that nature was essentially good despite its fallen condition, Augustine said "But had you begun with looking on the book of nature as the production of the Creator of all ... you would not have been led into these impious follies and blasphemous fancies with which, in your ignorance of what evil really is, you heap all evils upon God" (*Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32.20 in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series I, Vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff [Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library], 583, available at: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf104.pdf>). Origen had anticipated this view by maintaining that the natural world is full of symbols, suggesting a text that might be read. See Peter Harrison, "The Bible and the Emergence of Modern Science," *Science and Christian Belief* 18:2 (2006): 115–132, 118, available at: <https://www.scienceandchristianbelief.org/articles/Harrison-article-18-2.pdf>.

Christians have used to negotiate culture, what are their implications for the intersection of faith and science, and which of these models is most congenial to a Lutheran understanding (section 5)? And what difference does it make to science if we see nature, and ourselves, as creations, not accidents (section 6 and 7)? Finally, we will see how Christian theology, rather than being a superstitious relic of our pre-scientific past, provides a strong foundation and motivation for modern science (section 8).

2. The authority of Scripture and the proper role of reason

As society moves in post-Christian directions, we see an increasing number of books on science and religion which assume without argument that science is the highest authority. While some of these works are overtly antagonistic to revealed religion,³² it is common even among the friendlier ones to assume that science can correct Scripture. For example, in a recent work on the neuroscience of religious experience, Andrew Newberg and Mark Waldman reject biblical Christianity in favor of a more inclusive, Unitarian spirituality. They claim that it is a matter of pragmatic survival that our belief in God should progress:

[I]f you cannot change your image of God, you may have trouble tolerating people who hold different images of God, and that may threaten our planet's survival.... if you cling to your childhood perceptions, you will limit your perception of the truth. This is the drawback to any religion that insists upon a literal, biblical image of God.³³

The controlling idea for the New Atheist or opponents of biblical Christianity is that what we should believe about God is defined by what science has revealed as the best way for humans to get along in this world. The assumption here and in many similar works is that the human brain has generated various pictures of God, and the important question is to determine which picture is most useful on therapeutic and sociological grounds. The idea that God might authoritatively reveal the truth of Himself to us from above is rejected in favor of a pragmatic theology from below, which does not see religion as a matter of truth at all.

³² Some obvious examples would be the works of the New Atheists, such as: Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006) and *The Magic of Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 2011); Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Penguin, 2007); Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2011); and Lawrence Krauss, *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather than Nothing* (New York: The Free Press, 2012).

³³ Andrew Newberg and Mark Waldman, *How God Changes the Brain* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009), 103–104.

In response to this, it is important to gain a correct understanding of the authority of Scripture and of the proper role of reason. Lutheran theology is clear that the Scripture is the inspired,³⁴ infallible Word of God,³⁵ and as such it is our highest authority and most reliable criterion for knowledge. Due to its divine source, Scripture is in a quite different category from the perspective of any human faculty, including our senses and reason. These faculties at best tell us how the spatio-temporal world most likely operates, from a finite, creaturely perspective. But we are severely limited by a number of factors.

First, we live at particular locations in space and time and our attempts to reconstruct the past and to anticipate the future are fraught with uncertainty because of our limited access to data and the need to make assumptions which could be false (such as the assumption that processes observed in the present operated in the same way in the remote past, and will continue to do so in the future).³⁶ Second, although science has been spectacularly successful in positing mechanisms and laws behind the world of appearances, there is no warrant for supposing this gives us the final answer as to how the world really is in itself. Given our vantage point, it seems the best we can hope for is to discover contingent patterns and regularities: to say that these are absolute, necessary laws of nature on a par with the Law of God goes far beyond what the data justify.³⁷ After all, the entire cosmos is temporary and in constant flux; it is not a place of timeless truth. Third, as Francis Bacon (1561–1626) taught us, even with the data we have, we are prone to bias—to “idols of the mind”—in our interpretation of those data.³⁸ A major flaw in Bacon's account, however, is that he supposed we could cleanse ourselves from bias, so as to perform a “true induction” from the data alone. This conflicts with the fact that sin affects not only our religious and moral faculties, but also our reason. Our sinful desire for godlike knowledge and mastery of reality

³⁴ 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19.

³⁵ For an explanation of the meanings of “inspired” and “infallible” as understood by the Lutheran Church Missouri–Synod, see: “A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles, IV Holy Scripture,” available at: <http://www.lcms.org/doctrine/scripturalprinciplesIV>.

³⁶ In philosophy, this is related to Hume's “problem of induction.” David Hume showed that there is no way to give a logical justification for our inductive expectation that the future will resemble the past, because any principle we use (such as “nature is uniform”) assumes that resemblance, making the argument circular.

³⁷ In fact, it conflicts with recent science itself to say this, as most scientists accept that the universe could have had quite different laws (the laws of nature are contingent on the “fine tuning” of the universe).

³⁸ See Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, ed. by Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Bk I. Bacon distinguished: “idols of the tribe,” which afflict all human beings, e.g., reading non-existent order into coincidences; “idols of the cave,” which afflict individuals, e.g., the influence of a mentor; “idols of the market place,” or confusions caused by language, e.g., treating cold as a real thing; and “idols of the theatre” or mistaken rules of demonstration, e.g., the Aristotelian idea that determining what an object must do by intuiting its essence made it unnecessary to determine empirically if that object does behave in that way.

makes us expect more from science than it can or should give: we want the final answers and final control to lie in the works of our own minds.³⁹ Another name for this is idolatry, which makes us deny our creaturely dependence on God, our inability to cure our sinful condition, and our need for a Savior.

Thus, as finite, fallen creatures, our assumption should be that human thought constructions are penultimate, incomplete and prone to error both in detail and in their systematic orientation and design. That does not mean we should give up on using reason or doing science, however. Reason is a valuable gift, but its proper function is that of a servant oriented to the service of neighbor, rather than that of a usurping judge that aims to correct or to supplant God. Luther made this clear in his important distinction between the right and wrong use of reason when approaching God's Word.⁴⁰ The wrong use of reason—the “magisterial use”—allows human reason to judge which aspects of God's Word are (or are not) acceptable. This means that the finite, contingent and fallible works of the human mind are used to evaluate the revelation of an infinite, necessary, and infallible God, which exaggerates the certainty of science and undermines confidence in God's Word. The right use of reason—the “ministerial use”—is that of a servant to revelation. Following Anselm (1033–1109), reason may be used to aid a *faith seeking understanding* (*fides quaerens intellectum*), for example, when systematic theology explores the consequences of Scripture for various doctrines. It may also be used to *defend the faith* (Christian apologetics), and to *apply the faith* in the Christian life (Christian ethics). In the latter case, it may help to disclose the best, specific means of serving a neighbor, concerning which Scripture is often silent. Scripture contains no books of plumbing or automotive repair: it exhorts us to love our neighbor as ourselves, but leaves the techniques to human ingenuity.

Science is a spectacular manifestation of human reason. But for all its success and power, still science is rightly understood as a servant. It has a very important role, but a limited one. Science is not authorized to stand as an arbiter over God and His Word, and it makes no contribution to our salvation. But it is a wonderful gift for Christian living in this world. As a minister that serves our faith, science vastly increases our ability to meet our neighbor's temporal needs. So we should neither exalt science as a surrogate religion,

³⁹ In this regard, Bacon himself is frequently criticized for his dictum “knowledge is power,” which expressed his belief that a major motivation for science is to gain control of the natural world. While Bacon claimed that this was for “the relief of man's estate,” the temptation of this power is that it provides the illusion that we are not creatures dependent on God's common and salvific grace, but masters of our own destiny. For C. S. Lewis, this was the primary temptation behind the tower of Babel (Gen. 11) and its modern equivalent: a “scientocracy” in which human technology replaces God as our Provider and Savior. For an incisive, recent exploration of this theme, see ed. John G. West, *The Magician's Twin: C. S. Lewis on Science, Scientism, and Society* (Seattle: Discovery Institute Press, 2012).

⁴⁰ For an excellent discussion of Luther's views on the proper role of reason in the spiritual and earthly realms, see Steven A. Hein, “Reason and the Two Kingdoms: An Essay in Luther's Thought,” *The Springfielder* 36:2 (September 1972), available on-line at: <http://www.ctstv.net/media/pdfs/heinreasonontwokingdoms.pdf>.

which dispenses with the need for revelation, nor despise it on account of its potential for misuse.⁴¹ Rather, the proper approach is a middle way, in which science is an instrument that serves our scripturally revealed purpose to love one another, as Christ has loved us.

3. The proper relationship between God's “two books”

It might seem that this settles the question of how to read God's “two books,” the book of Scripture (God's Word) and the book of nature (God's works). Yet while Scripture is the supreme source and norm for knowledge, the interplay between scientific and scriptural knowledge is a subtle matter. One of the main reasons for this is the human tendency to impose meanings on a text that are not there, which can happen both with the scriptural and the natural text. It is easy to do *eisegesis* (where the interpreter expresses his or her own preferred ideas, though they do not derive from the text itself), when we are called to do *exegesis* (to draw out the meaning that really resides in the text). In particular, if we wrongly assume that Scripture is speaking in the terms of a scientific theory when it is not, or if we assume that nature can only be understood through that theory, we may easily construct a false conflict between the two books.

A famous example of this is the alleged contradiction between modern science and Joshua 10:12–13, which describes a day when the sun stood still. If we suppose this text to be expressing a scientific theory in astronomy, it is easy to suppose that Scripture is committed to the geocentric paradigm, according to which the sun is one of many planets going round a stationary Earth. So the sun “standing still” means that it became still like the Earth. The problem is that we now have excellent reason to reject the geocentric paradigm in favor of a heliocentric one, in which the Earth is one of many planets going around the Sun. Although Scripture is our supreme standard, it would be improperly dogmatic to insist that human science is simply wrong before considering whether our interpretation of Scripture was required by the text. The Bible is a collection of inspired, infallible writings, yet God inspires human writers to convey His message in humanly comprehensible terms. And throughout the Scripture we see God communicating to us in the terms of common-sense appearances.

For example, we are told eight times in Matthew's gospel that the kingdom of Heaven is *like* various familiar things accessible to the senses, such as a mustard seed, leaven and treasure. Using this approach, the Joshua text simply says that from an earthbound perspective the sun appeared to be still (which is remarkable enough), which does not imply that the Earth

⁴¹ The principle here is *abusus non tollit usum* (abuse does remove proper use). Thus, for example, the fact that wine may be abused does not remove its proper use in Holy Communion.

is absolutely stationary and does not involve commitment to a particular astronomical theory. It then becomes clear that the apparent conflict between science and Scripture was generated by reading scientific claims into Scripture that were simply not there.

This example suggests that we must proceed with caution when putting Scripture and nature side by side. Living after the scientific revolution, it is difficult for us to see nature without already conceiving of it in scientific terms. This poses several dangers for our proper reading of Scripture. One of these is that whenever Scripture speaks about a natural topic, we naturally suppose it is speaking in scientific terms. We then complain, for example, that the mustard seed is not “the smallest of all seeds” (Mt. 13:32) or that grains of wheat do not “die” when buried in the ground (John 12:24; 1 Cor. 15:36), when it is clear that we are being presented with potent images of faith and our baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus, before even raising the question of whether science is relevant to a scriptural text, we must first ask: what is the primary message of the text? That primary message is a helpful guide to discerning the genre of the text. If the primary message of the preceding passages is about how man is saved, and the truth is a spiritual and theological one expressed in the images understood by a particular audience not versed in modern science, it is both gratuitous and anachronistic to impose a wooden interpretation based on contemporary science, as if the principal purpose had been to offer advice in modern agronomy (these matters are taken up at greater length in chapter 4).

But another problem is that in our scientific age, an unexamined presumption of scientism (the view that science is the only source of knowledge) can deaden our sensibilities to deeper truths God intends to communicate through nature, simply because we lack a scientific framework for making sense of them. This was one of C. S. Lewis’s concerns in his great work on the transition from the medieval to the modern world, *The Discarded Image*.⁴² Lewis was well aware that the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic model of the seven planets was false as science, but he rightly lamented that in rejecting that model, modern science also encouraged the rejection of some theological truths that model had been used to express. Lewis pointed out that, as developed by medieval thinkers who suggested that each planet was guided by an angelic intelligence, this model beautifully expressed the truth of God’s universal, immanent presence in the world. However, after Newton—himself a religious believer—it became easy to think that space was just a dark, silent void (Newton had thought of space as simply a vacuum, something more recent science has rejected⁴³). By unconsciously transferring this cosmological model into the realm of theology, it is much easier for modern people to

⁴² C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁴³ According to the latest cosmological theories, “empty” space is actually filled with dark matter and dark energy.

be deists, who accept God’s existence as a transcendent being, but who deny His providential, immanent presence within the cosmos and in each of our lives.⁴⁴

By contrast, Scripture tells us that God is so intimately concerned with each one of us, that even the hairs of our head are numbered (Matt. 10:30). Furthermore, nature is not a silent void but an active means of communication between God and man:

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge. (Ps. 19:1–2)

We should not assume that this is a thesis of modern, scientific, information theory, demanding that we uncover a hidden system of transmitting data to us in rocks, animals and plants! Rather, the natural world was not only created by God’s Word, but is still governed by it. His Word, His *logos*, is inscribed in nature and speaks to us of God’s glorious design and providence. So not only should we resist imposing alien scientific interpretations on Scripture, we should also see that science is not the *only* way of understanding nature. Scripture opens our mind to the natural world as a source of spiritual and theological knowledge: it speaks of God, His attributes and His works, and it testifies to a God whose involvement in this world is ubiquitous and ongoing.

At the same time, it is possible to impose scriptural and theological truths on science in inappropriate ways. For example, as Peter Harrison points out, the scholastic approach to both science and Scripture emphasized allegorical over literal interpretations.⁴⁵ Not only did this mean that the plain meaning of Scripture was sometimes obscured by endless speculations about secondary, symbolic meanings, but it also meant that Scripture was sometimes inappropriately imposed on science in order to see nature as a storehouse of moral and theological lessons for mankind. A well-known example of this is the ancient Christian symbolism of the pelican which, in Christlike fashion, wounds its own breast to feed its young with its blood. As a poetic image this is poignant and powerful, but pelicans do not in fact do this.⁴⁶ It is important to see that the main goal of science is to offer accurate, testable descriptions

⁴⁴ Evidence for this is found in the survey of American teen religiosity reported in Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*. Smith and Denton say that a common view held by members of a variety of religious groups (both Christian and non-Christian) is that the religious life is about being good (moralism), feeling good (therapy), and a distant God who is there if needed but otherwise stays uninvolved in our lives (deism). For more on the origin of moralistic therapeutic deism, see chapter 2 of this report.

⁴⁵ Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴⁶ This poetic image continues to be used on occasion in Christian hymnody. See *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 640, v. 3.

and explanation. The statements of science do not claim to have moral or religious significance, and one is forsaking science proper when one adds a value-laden interpretation to them (even though that interpretation may be philosophically or theologically sound). It is important, therefore, to distinguish carefully what science as science can tell us from further conclusions we may draw with the aid of additional, non-scientific assumptions. Science alone cannot tell us that nature is a medium of God’s communication to mankind. But then, we should never have supposed that science is the only way of knowing in the first place.

A second problem, which reflects the influence of scientism on our thinking, is that modern Christians are tempted to use science as a way of proving Scripture. This is an odd approach, given the relative status of science in relation to Scripture. Scripture is the eternal, infallible revelation of a perfect Being uncontaminated with sin and unlimited by spatio-temporal location. Yet the finite and fallible findings of human reason are thought necessary to establish the authority of God’s Word! To be sure, in an apologetic context, when dealing with someone who does not accept Scripture as God’s Word, it is very helpful to provide independent, scientific evidence in favor of its major claims. The problem arises, however, when a particular scientific theory or finding is used as a final proof of a scriptural text. Science by its nature is a fallible enterprise, and its theories and even its most basic assertions are frequently revised. For centuries, nothing seemed more obvious than that the Earth is stationary, that weight and time are constants, that light travels in straight lines, and that nature makes no jumps; yet the advances of Copernicus, Newton, Einstein and quantum theory have shown that every one of these ideas is mistaken. Pluto, discovered in 1930, survived as a “planet” only until 2006, when scientists reclassified the heavenly body as a “dwarf planet,” although the decision remains controversial and may be reversed.⁴⁷ It is unwise to rely on fallible conjectures that may tomorrow be consigned to the dustbin of science, in order to give the final seal of veracity on Scripture’s claims.

To summarize this discussion, rather than relying on a simplistic algorithm for relating God’s two books (such as NOMA,⁴⁸ with its stark separation between God’s Word and God’s work), it is helpful to keep in mind several principles about Scripture, science, and their interrelationship:

1. Scripture, not science, is God’s Word. It is inspired and infallible, even as its source is a perfect Being unaffected by sin or finitude.

⁴⁷ For a recent discussion, see Doyle Rice, “Wait, what? Pluto a planet again?” *USA Today*, October 2, 2014, available at: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2014/10/02/pluto-planet-solar-system/16578959/>.

⁴⁸ On NOMA, or, “nonoverlapping magisteria,” see Introduction, 7. The concept is given further consideration in chapter 3.

2. Yet, the Scripture speaks through its inspired human writers, and generally reflects the way the world ordinarily appears in their experience. It should not be assumed that Scripture advocates a particular scientific theory, or that all of its claims about particulars are presented in a scientific manner.
3. Science is not the only source of knowledge about nature. As science is currently practiced, it aims at a literal, value-free description and explanation of nature, and is not able to account for deeper meanings. Scripture tells us of a natural revelation in which God, our Creator, speaks to us through the medium of the natural world to reveal His orderly design and providential care of His creation (Ps. 19:1–2). This does not have to be understood as a scientific account, but is an independent source of knowledge in its own right.
4. Scriptural and theological interpretations of nature, while they are legitimate and valuable, should not be confused with science itself. Science can provide knowledge about the “what” and “how” of nature, but only Christian theology—revealed partially in nature and with full clarity and authority in Scripture—can explain the “why” of nature and help us to behold God with the majesty and awe that His work deserves. This is precisely why a rich theology of nature should complement natural science.
5. For the purpose of Christian apologetics, scientific evidence may be used in support of scriptural claims (about nature or all theology), but due to the fallible nature of science, it is incapable of providing certainty of proof. Rather, Scripture is self-authenticating.

In applying these principles, we are pointed toward the primary purposes of Scripture and science. As John’s Gospel tells us, God’s Word is “written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). So our central focus in reading Scripture must be on what Scripture tells about the nature and work of Christ and on our living relationship with Him. That means that the scientific implications of scriptural statements should generally be given only secondary attention, and may often be irrelevant to the intended sense of the text. Likewise, the primary purpose of science is to tell us how nature appears to be working. Speculations about the meaning and value of this working should be viewed as secondary layers of philosophical and theological interpretation, not as part of science proper. While NOMA suggests (at least in theory) that there is no overlap between science and theology, it is apparent that is not the case. There is overlap—often significant overlap. And, where they overlap, Christian theology asserts that Scripture, not science, has final authority. Nevertheless, it is critical to see that the overlap is partial, not complete. Both science and theology have important roles. In Lutheran terms, both the vocations of the scientist and the theologian are honorable and godly. Neither replaces the other. Both are ultimately intended for the glory of God

and the well-being of His creatures—most especially humankind, the crown of His creation.

4. The doctrine of vocation

When God tells us to love and serve our neighbor, the ways that we fulfill this command are defined by our various vocations.⁴⁹ A vocation is a calling from God to serve our neighbor where He has placed us using the gifts He has provided. Science itself should not be a pursuit devised by human beings to satisfy our own curiosity or gratify our desire for power and control. It reflects our primary call to be stewards of the earth, which requires us to use reason to understand the nature and operation of our natural environment, so that we can utilize its potential to develop culture⁵⁰ and preserve its resources for posterity. All vocations are bound by God's law, and so the scientific vocation is not a license to exploit the world but involves duties, responsibilities and other moral boundaries. The world is not a disposable asset, but a trust which we are to husband for the good of present and future generations of people, all of whom are our neighbors.

It is important to understand the contrast between this understanding of science and the one prevalent today, that science is a "profession." Vocation and profession are not the same thing. To see the difference, it is helpful to contrast the self-understanding of scientists at the birth of modern science with the one which has become dominant since the 19th century. Some of the greatest scientists of the modern scientific revolution in the 16th and 17th centuries were Christians. They were greatly interested in theology, and they wanted a way to conceive of their scientific work as a God-pleasing activity. Before the Reformation, "vocation" was a term reserved for specifically ecclesial offices, such as priest, monk, or nun. However, Luther emphasized the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9), which implied that ordinary, earthly work (in the home, in society, and the workplace) was God-pleasing. Combining this insight with the idea that nature is God's other book, several leading scientists, including Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) and Robert Boyle (1627–1691), came to see themselves as priests in the book of nature.⁵¹ So

⁴⁹ For an accessible exposition of the doctrine of vocation as a theology of Christian living, see Gene Edward Veith, *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life*, Redesign Edition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2011). For a superb exposition of the doctrine as developed by Luther, see Gustaf Wingren's masterpiece, *Luther on Vocation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004). For an approach oriented to Bible study, see Angus Menzies, "Vocation," in ed. Edward Engelbrecht, *The Lutheran Difference* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010).

⁵⁰ A succinct definition of "culture" as the term is used in this report is "what humans do to nature to serve their own purposes."

⁵¹ See Peter Harrison, "Priests of the Most High God, with Respect to the Book of Nature," in ed. Angus Menzies, *Reading God's World: The Scientific Vocation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 59–84.

influential was this paradigm for several centuries that workers in this area were often described as natural theologians.

Indeed, the word "scientist" is a new one, not entering the lexicon until 1834,⁵² and it signified a momentous change in the way science was conceived:

The success of this new designation is not merely a semantic curiosity because it was largely a reflection of the general growth of distinct professions during this period. More importantly, the appearance of the term *scientist* signaled the end of that typically eighteenth- and nineteenth-century phenomenon of the priest-naturalist. Over the course of the nineteenth century deliberate moves were afoot to elevate the status of the natural sciences This could only take place, many believed, if the social powers of the priesthood were challenged and the domination of the university curriculum by theology and the humanities brought to an end Henceforth, it is the scientist who is the authoritative purveyor of true and useful knowledge.⁵³

The key to the reconceiving of science as a profession, rather than a priestly vocation, is the assertion that science is independent of the church. The scientist is no longer seen as a priest (in the broad sense) who happens to like laboratories or the great outdoors. Instead, the scientist is someone who follows the methods and procedures prescribed by professional bodies independent of the church—which generally means a group of qualified individuals directing the trajectory of scientific research or practice.

On the one hand, it is true that modern science does not require a person to be a Christian: it recognizes a general human condition, according to which the procedures and results of science must be accessible to any competent investigator, regardless of ideological or religious persuasion. So it is fair to say that practicing science does not require one to see science as a vocation. But on the other hand, those scientists who are Christian lose a great deal when they are trained to see their work merely as a profession. Indeed, as Nancy Pearcey has argued, these scientists often experience considerable internal conflict, because they do not see how to relate their life as a Christian with their work as a scientist.⁵⁴

The difference this makes is that vocation provides a framework of religious and moral meaning for scientific work which is severely truncated in

⁵² The term was coined by William Whewell (1794–1866).

⁵³ Harrison, "Priests of the Most High God," 78.

⁵⁴ See Nancy Pearcey, "How Science Became a Christian Vocation," in ed. Angus Menzies, *Reading God's World: The Scientific Vocation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 23–57 and her *Total Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

the concept of a profession. Professional standards of scientific conduct say nothing about being called by God to be a steward of His creation, or about our obligation to love and serve our neighbor through all that we do.⁵⁵ On this understanding, while Christian scientists may benefit from their faith in private, they may see no meaningful way to relate their faith to their public work. A recurrent problem is that while professional codes of ethics may express the consensus on "best practice," they do not reflect a biblical understanding of morality, especially as it bears on the dignity and value of all life. But the disconnect is also found in the inability of some scientists to integrate their findings with a Christian worldview. To cite one of Pearcey's starkest examples, one Christian quantum physicist, when asked how he related his faith to his work, said merely that quantum mechanics is like auto-mechanics, and had no connection with his faith.⁵⁶ Had this scientist thought through the implications of the doctrine of vocation, he might have realized that faith is relevant to both auto-mechanics and quantum mechanics. Both are ways of glorifying God by unveiling the ordering principles God built into nature and by serving our neighbor through discovering nature's secrets and developing beneficial technology.⁵⁷

Not only does the idea of vocation invest science with considerably more meaning than the secularized notion of a profession, it also provides important guidance and boundaries for scientific work. If the goal is to love and serve one's neighbor then the scientist should not do certain things. He or she should not merely pursue a popular form of technology because it will make money or make the scientist famous. These outcomes as such are not wrong, but they should be the result of developing a product which serves human welfare, not the primary motivation for doing science. A great example of someone whose Christian values informed and guided his science is Robert Boyle. After studying theology and ethics, Boyle went into science partly to discover inexpensive, chemical remedies for the ailments of the poor.⁵⁸ This moral motivation for doing science is a powerful way of finding meaning in scientific work.

Likewise, some forms of scientific experimentation will be off-limits because they are unethical. If they directly involve, or indirectly cause, avoidable harm to people, the faithful scientist should think hard about whether

⁵⁵ Originally, the "Hippocratic Oath," which physicians swore to uphold, contained a prayer and forbade practices which would harm patients. The various oaths now used by many medical schools typically omit any prayer and also omit certain practices from the list of proscribed procedures (most notably abortion).

⁵⁶ Pearcey, "How Science Became a Christian Vocation," 27.

⁵⁷ Admittedly, quite a bit of theoretical quantum mechanics might seem remote to serving our neighbor's needs, but in fact it lies behind such incredibly useful technological innovations as the laser.

⁵⁸ See Edward B. Davis, "Science As Christian Vocation," in ed. Angus Menzies, *Reading God's World: The Scientific Vocation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 189–210.

one can in good conscience participate in the research and even about whether it should be openly opposed. Human beings are specially made in the image of God. While we are authorized, within limits, to shape the non-human environment to serve our needs, we should not attempt to "flatten" creation, so that other human beings are also treated merely as natural resources. As the great philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) said in his ethical writings, we should never treat other persons as a means to an end but always as ends in themselves.⁵⁹ What he meant was that persons are not merely things which exist to be used for various purposes. Persons have value in themselves. It is a violation of the dignity of persons for us to use them merely as a collection of experimental resources to serve our purposes, as if we were persons but they were not.

5. Christianity and culture

When negotiating the intersection between faith and science, a theological assumption that plays a large role in how these realms are understood to relate to each other concerns the proper way for the Christian to approach culture. Although it can be criticized, the classic typology for relating Christianity and culture developed by H. Richard Niebuhr (1894–1962) is helpful in explaining the different approaches of various theological traditions.⁶⁰

Niebuhr distinguishes two one-dimensional models and three two-dimensional models. The one-dimensional models involve the radical extremes of rejecting culture for Christ ("Christ against culture") or affirming culture for Christ ("Christ of culture"). The two-dimensional models emphasize that God is King of all things and that He rules in two ways, through two "kingdoms." He rules in our hearts through the spiritual kingdom of grace through faith. But He also rules the earthly kingdom through various orders He has instituted to maintain order and to preserve His creation.

a. The one-dimensional models

The Christ against culture paradigm, exemplified by Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) and the Mennonites, sees the Christian's calling as one of following Christ directly in all of life. Thus obligations to the state (taxes, oaths of allegiance) may be seen as violations of the first commandment. Since Christ

⁵⁹ This is the second formulation of his celebrated "categorical imperative," which attempts to explicate the rational basis for the golden rule: do unto others as you would have them do to you. The first formulation of the categorical imperative says: so act that you can will your action to be a universal law for all people. It attempts to short circuit the person who wants to do a wrong that they rely on others not doing, such as burglary.

⁶⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956). For a critical evaluation of this work see, for example, ed. Angus Menzies, *Christ and Culture in Dialogue* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999) and D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). See also the appendices Z, AA, and BB in Charles Manske and Daniel Harmelink, *World Religions Today* (Irvine, CA: Institute of World Religions, 1996) for a helpful two-page outline and chart illustrating Niebuhr's model.

tells us to love our enemy and turn the other cheek, the Christian should not be a soldier. Fundamentally, the Christ Against Culture view is inadequate because Jesus himself recognizes a legitimate role for temporal authority: we are to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's (Matt. 22:21). Even Pilate has some authority over Christ in His human nature, because that authority was given to him from above (John 19:11). Likewise, Paul explains that the governing authorities are instituted by God and so one cannot simply set the claims of God against the claims of the state (Rom. 13). It is only if government abuses its office and commands the Christian to do what is directly contrary to the Law of God that we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

Examples of the Christ of culture model include both Modernist and Postmodernist Christianity. Modernizers, like Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), sought to square Christian teaching with a worldview dominated by scientific materialism. Thus, they rejected literal miracles in favor of existential interpretations in the life of the Christian (e.g., people do not really rise from the dead, but you will experience a new "life" within you, etc.). Postmodernizers (including currents within the "emergent church") have likewise sought to understand the Christian claim not as objective truth for all mankind but as the perspective of a particular community of language users.⁶¹ More generally, much of mainstream Protestantism is dominated by the idea that the culture sets the agenda for the church, and that one should carefully study the dominant or "best" cultural trends to discern the wisest course for Christians to take.

While cultural sensitivity and understanding are valuable for Christian evangelists and apologists, the basic problem for the Christ of Culture view is that even the best of culture is still infected with human sin. To follow culture when it conflicts with loyalty to Christ is selling out the faith to seek honor among men (Matt. 6:2; Gal. 1:10). Likewise, to reject miracles foundational to the faith or to propose a new gospel that is more "relevant" is nullifying the Word of God for the sake of human tradition (Matt. 15:6). It is a denial that the only true Gospel is the one from God (John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Gal. 1:6–9). In practice, this view tends to promote a cultural idolatry that buries the transcendent Gospel in a barrage of manmade agendas which disingenuously appropriate Christian vocabulary: the result may have the form of godliness, but it denies its true power (2 Tim. 3:5).⁶²

Both of the one-dimensional models, therefore, are too simple to capture a proper understanding of the Christian's relationship to culture. Temporal

⁶¹ For a balanced presentation and effective critique of several major theses of the emergent church movement, see R. Scott Smith, *Truth and the New Kind of Christian: The Emerging Effects of Postmodernism in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007).

⁶² One of the greatest of the 20th century critics of such theological liberalism was J. Gresham Machen (1881–1937), who opposed the increasing compromise of God's Word in the Northern Presbyterian Church (now PCUSA). See *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009; first published in 1923).

authority has its place, as it is instituted by God, but slavish capitulation to culture is an abandonment of the Gospel. The two-dimensional models therefore try to hold the concerns of legitimate temporal authority (the earthly government) and allegiance to Christ (the spiritual government) in proper balance.

b. The two-dimensional models

The disagreement between theological traditions that accept the two kingdoms idea⁶³ centers on the relation between the kingdoms. Classical Catholic theology proposed a synthesis of the spiritual and earthly kingdoms ("Christ above culture") where the spiritual kingdom governs the earthly kingdom. Thus for Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), there is a sharp distinction between the natural (temporal, earthly) ends of man, governed by the cardinal virtues (courage, justice, temperance and prudence), which are available to all people regardless of faith, and the supernatural (eternal, heavenly) ends of man, governed by the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity), available to the Christian only through grace. What the Fall into sin did in this view was to sever humanity's connection to its supernatural ends, while leaving the ability to pursue natural ends basically intact. Thus redemption is a matter of restoring the supernatural ends (grace completing nature) in the individual Christian. Likewise, in a Christian society (such as the theocracies of medieval Christendom), ecclesial government (directed at our supernatural ends) completes earthly government (directed at our natural ends).

By contrast, in the Reformed tradition ("Christ the transformer of culture"), both the severity of the Fall and the scope of redemption are given a more dramatic understanding. The Reformed combine a deep pessimism about fallen man with a profound optimism about the implications of redemption. The Fall does not merely mean that humanity lost its orientation to supernatural ends. It means "total depravity": we are made enemies of God, and all of our faculties are turned away from God. Not only are individuals turned inward and regard themselves as gods, cultural institutions likewise assert their independence of God and glorify their own works in idolatrous rebellion. In this context, nothing but a complete transformation of the natural man can help. Grace does not complete nature; it fundamentally restructures and reorients it, yielding new life in Christ. The transformationist thinks that it is not only individuals, but cultures, that can be redeemed. So there is an emphasis on reclaiming the culture for Christ, supported by means and strategies such as Christian bookstores, Christian movies, and Christianized approaches to art, history, literature, government, and science.

The Lutheran perspective (typified by Niebuhr as "Christ and culture in paradox") agrees with the Reformed position that sin is a condition of total depravity, but disagrees that Christians should aim to redeem culture.

⁶³ See fn 23 for a succinct definition of "the two kingdoms."

Lutherans do believe that cultures can be changed for the better as Christians carry out their vocation in the world. But they believe that such change is temporary at best, and that we should simply aim to do the best that we can for the people we are able to help and with the gifts that God has provided. While individual Christians can exert an important influence in the political sphere, it does not make sense to seek to Christianize government because God's left-hand kingdom is not a place of abiding hope (Ps. 146:3). The unique and primary vocation of the church (which bears the Word) is to proclaim the Gospel in truth and purity and to rightly administer the sacraments. The vocation of government (which bears the Sword) is to restrain evil and uphold temporal order, thus allowing free passage for the Gospel. This means that government is susceptible to two main errors: it may wrongly present itself as an institution of salvation (as may happen in a state church), or it may wrongly use force to attempt the impossible task of coercing faith, failing to recognize that only God can create faith (Matt. 16:17; 1 Cor. 3:7). Earthly governments, therefore, provide a framework and context in which the Christian can serve his neighbor and witness to the Gospel, but our ultimate hope is in the kingdom that is *not* of this world (John 18:36).⁶⁴

c. Applying these models to the intersection of faith and science

When these five models of Christianity and culture are applied to the intersection of faith and science, they yield strikingly different results which help us understand the wide disagreement between Christians on these matters, and also help to elucidate what is distinctive about a Lutheran approach to science.

A Christ against culture approach is liable to reject at least some of science on the grounds that its assumptions, aims, practices, and claims conflict with allegiance to Christ and His Word. At a moderate level, this might involve refusing to seriously evaluate or use particular statements, theories, and technologies. A more extreme reaction would be to reject the work and institutions of science altogether as idolatrous and godless diversions from Christ. Either way, it is likely that Christians with this perspective will feel uncomfortable about scientific work and this will disincite them to pursue science as a vocation. Surely, something has gone wrong here. The legitimacy of science is implicit in our original call to be stewards of God's world: how can we preserve this trust without knowing how nature operates? And if the scientific vocation aims merely to serve the neighbor and not to usurp Christ as Savior and Lord, there is no reason that it cannot be pursued by Christians.

A Christ of culture approach tends to reinterpret the Scriptures and Christian doctrines restlessly in light of the latest findings of science. Thus

⁶⁴ For a more extensive examination of the proper relationship between church and state, see the CTCR's report *Render Under Caesar... and Unto God: A Lutheran View of Church and State* (St. Louis: CPH, 1995), available at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcsm&id=360>.

the plausibility of miracles depends on whether they can be made to fit in current scientific theories, religious experience may be analyzed as something generated by "God genes" or "God spots" in the brain,⁶⁵ and God must create through the evolutionary process as presently conceived. We quickly see that this model lends itself to the magisterial use of reason. Science and Scripture exchange their actual status, disfiguring both: the Scriptures are viewed as science should be (fallible and limited) while the latest science is viewed as Scripture should be (ultimate authority). It also easily makes the anachronistic assumption that Scripture speaks in the same terms as current scientific theories, which may distort the true message of Scripture, set up a false conflict between science and Scripture and promote misguided attempts to "improve" Scripture. So far from saving Christianity by updating it, what this model actually does is to accord religious veneration to the findings of science (scientism) while deriding God's Word as an outmoded relic of a superstitious past.

The Christ above culture model offers an intellectually impressive response to the intersection of faith and reason. Seeing that God operates in both the natural world and the human heart, and believing that grace completes nature, it naturally encourages the idea that the best human science can be synthesized with the truths of Scripture. As Aquinas took Aristotle's cardinal virtues and synthesized them with the theological virtues, Aristotelian science was combined with Scripture. A more recent manifestation of the same approach is the attempt to combine the Christian faith with neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory.⁶⁶ The fatal flaw of this approach is the way in which it attempts to fuse the ultimate and the penultimate, the eternal and the contingent, the infallible and the fallible. Simply joining Christianity with the latest and greatest scientific theory is a bad idea because it creates the false sense that the authority of the Word rests on that theory. So when Aristotelian science was roundly rejected at the birth of modern science, it appeared that Christianity itself had been discredited. Likewise, an increasing number of scholars agree with eminent philosopher Thomas Nagel's assessment that the reductive materialism which lies behind the Neo-Darwinian paradigm is "ripe for displacement,"⁶⁷ as it offers no credible account of the origin of biological information, consciousness, and the norms of rationality and morality. Marrying Christianity with science is not only prone to producing widows, it creates inappropriate pressure to make Christian teachings "fit"

⁶⁵ For a survey and critique of such debunking accounts of religious experience, see Mario Beauregard and Denyse O'Leary, *The Spiritual Brain: A Neuroscientist's Case for the Existence of the Soul* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

⁶⁶ See, for example, Kenneth Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), and *Only a Theory: Evolution and the Battle for America's Soul* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2008).

⁶⁷ Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 12.

scientific findings or to impose Christian interpretations on scientific facts, thereby confusing the two realms. The result is often a curious mélange of science and theology which draws fire from both the best scientists and the best theologians.⁶⁸

Niebuhr's fifth model ("Christ transforming culture") recognizes, to its credit, that there is likely to be a great deal of apparent conflict when the ideas of finite, fallen humans meet the transcendent Word of God. But rather than distancing itself from science, like the Christ against culture approach, in this view the solution is to transform and redeem science so that it honors Christ. In one way this is very helpful. Science is not a self-sufficient enterprise, but rests on frequently unexamined presuppositions. A transformationist, inspired by Paul's admonition to "destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God," and to "take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5), may skillfully expose in secular thought the presence of philosophical assumptions about the nature and purpose of science which are antagonistic to Christianity. For example, it may reveal the limitations of assuming "methodological naturalism," a rule of scientific procedure which asserts that scientists may infer only natural causes for every phenomena. This may be a perfectly reasonable rule of thumb in many areas of science, but when it is treated as an absolute criterion of knowledge it excludes not only miracles but also God's providential activity in all of nature.

However, just as transformationists may be tempted by the theocratic impulse to Christianize government, so they may also attempt to Christianize science once and for all. This makes the same mistake as the synthesis model. In Niebuhr's phrase, it "absolutizes the relative": it attempts to find ultimate, eternal, infallible truth in science which can only offer penultimate, temporal, fallible conjectures and models. This is, in effect, an epistemology of glory, one which tries to reach up and know God by reason. What is needed instead is an epistemology of the cross, which accepts the creaturely limitations of all our mental constructs and humbly receives illumination from above through faith in Christ and His Word.⁶⁹

In contrast to these other paradigms, the "paradox" model, attributed by Niebuhr to Luther and Lutheranism, has several resources to develop a more wholesome relationship between faith and science. First, since it does not look to anything in this world as a source of final answers, it declines

⁶⁸ Arguably, a good example of this is the theistic evolution of Denis Alexander and Francis Collins, roundly criticized by both scientists and theologians in Norman Nevin, ed., *Should Christians Embrace Evolution? Biblical and Scientific Responses* (Philipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2011). The problem can also arise when studying the neuroscience associated with religious experience, as discussed above.

⁶⁹ For a brilliant discussion of the distinction between an "epistemology of glory" and an "epistemology of the cross," see Jeff Mallinson, "Epistemology of the Cross: A Lutheran Response to Philosophical Theisms," in Adam Francisco, Steven Mueller and Korey D. Maas, eds., *Theologia et Apologia: Essays in Reformation Theology and Its Defense Presented to Rod Rosenblatt* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007).

scientism as offering what C. S. Lewis called "the sweet poison of the false infinite."⁷⁰ In other words, the paradox model recognizes that, like all human works, science cannot "save humanity" or "save the world." But, second, the paradox model affirms that science can indeed aid us in loving and serving our neighbor, so that Christians have good reason to explore and employ useful scientific theories and ideas, even if they contain some errors or are misused by others. Rather than wholesale rejection or uncritical embrace, the appropriate Lutheran posture to scientific theories is one of dialogue. One may rightly criticize some aspects or applications of a theory while affirming others. A theory which is false in its universal claims may still be helpful in a limited domain. A Christian scientist should not accept that materialistic evolution is the final and complete explanation of the origin and diversity of life, of consciousness, reason and morality, for that denies the essential role of God's creative Word. But that does not prevent the scientist from using the theory in more limited cases where it is empirically confirmed, such as studying resistance to antibiotics or treatments for HIV. Likewise, one can be skeptical of psychiatric approaches that rely almost exclusively on medication (because, for example, they ignore spiritual factors or alternative, cognitive therapies which accord the patient more dignity as someone made in the image of God), while granting the value of drugs in many cases.

It is precisely because Christians have a place to stand, on Christ, who is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8), that they do not have to lean on their own understanding (Prov. 3:5–6), including science, as a place for final answers. As Veith argues, this actually frees Christians to be both more skeptical and more open-minded toward the world's ideas than the secularist.⁷¹ Having rejected a transcendent foundation, the secularist is more likely to invest a favorite theory with a kind of religious significance, sometimes precisely because it is thought to provide a substitute for God. Thus Richard Dawkins approves of Darwinian theory in part because he thinks it makes it possible to be "an intellectually fulfilled atheist."⁷² Clearly this is to make a much stronger claim for the theory than the fallible empirical method and available data can support. This is no surprise, given the fact that humans are inherently religious, and as Luther explains, whatever we set our heart on and rely on for all good things is god for us.⁷³

If we compare a scientific theory to a dance partner, the contrast is that the secularist may inappropriately cling to that partner as a place of final refuge,

⁷⁰ C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (New York: Scribner, 1944), 70. This phrase is also the title and leading theme of chapter 1 of Gilbert Meilaender's *The Taste for the Other: The Social and Ethical Thought of C. S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

⁷¹ Gene Edward Veith, *Loving God With All Your Mind: Thinking as a Christian in the Postmodern World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003).

⁷² Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: Norton, 1986), 6.

⁷³ Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, Part 1.2, *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000], 386 (hereafter KW).

while the Christian can and should hold the partner only lightly. The partner may be interesting and helpful, but it is not our spiritual spouse: that place is already taken by Christ. Or, to use a comparison to an automobile, Christian scientists should be happy to "test-drive" any scientific theory to evaluate its merits, but they should see as folly any attempt to preserve that theory in pristine form (by dismissing or rationalizing away the accumulation of contrary evidence) because it gratifies a displaced spiritual need.

6. A Christocentric approach to creation

A major problem with many well-meaning attempts to understand science in Christian terms is that they are implicitly deistic: God creates the universe and governs it through laws, but is otherwise uninvolved in it. This modern picture of a distant God and a spiritually empty nature is precisely what Lewis lamented in *The Discarded Image*. It is not enough to connect a "God of the philosophers" with nature. We should seek to recapture the idea of a God who is actively present in His continuing creation, preservation and providential shaping of this world. As we have seen, the fact that contemporary science may have little interest in this topic is no reason not to develop a complementary theology of nature. And it may be that, as it dialogues with scientific theories held lightly, there is mutual illumination that does not distort the proper message and purpose of Scripture or science. Paul tells us not merely that "all things were created" by Christ, but also that they were created "for him," and that "in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16–17). This can be read as supplementing John's account that all things were created through the Word (John 1:1–3), by further affirming that Christ is *still personally present* as the unifying thread throughout the fabric of creation.

This authorizes what Harry Blamires calls the "sacramental cast,"⁷⁴ which sees everything created by God as testifying to Him and governed by His ongoing purposes. It provides a reason to resist the "nothing buttery" attitude of scientific reductionism. This attitude reflects the assumption that any apparently remarkable phenomenon is really *nothing but* something less remarkable: for example, morality is nothing but instinct, life is nothing but chemistry, and consciousness is merely a brain process.

In general the reductionist supposes that a created whole is nothing but the aggregate of its parts, and that we have a complete inventory and grasp of the parts. The Scriptures reject this view because we cannot fully understand what something is except in its relation to God. Thus God tells the prophet Jeremiah that He knew him before He formed him in the womb (Jer. 1:5), implying that what Jeremiah is as a person known by God cannot simply be reduced to the particular biological material formed during gestation.

⁷⁴ Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind*, 173f.

Likewise, all the things God creates are what they are not finally because of what they are made of, but because of His intentions and purposes. Thus a scientific analysis of a human being into cells or particles will not reveal that he is made in the image of God or is personally known by God, but the latter remain part of the final truth about who and what that person is. In the same way, a socioeconomic analysis of parenthood or work will not disclose the truth that they are callings from God, and a psychological profile of a Christian friend will not reveal the fact that he is an instrument in God's hands to bring others to faith. And although modern science continues to speak of nature as governed by laws, which suggests a personal lawgiver, its methods cannot detect God providentially shaping all things to work together for good for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).

Thus even where the reductionist paradigm works in science—and in many areas it is spectacularly successful—it should not be regarded as providing the whole truth. Relative to certain parameters (e. g., what is a thing is composed of or which of its properties can be measured quantitatively using the senses or physical instruments) it may give a satisfying explanation of phenomena. But the tractable, the measurable, and the quantifiable appearances of a thing do not exhaust it. In Kantian terms, *noumena* (things in themselves) are more than *phenomena* (things as they appear to us in experience), and the Bible may often reveal to us deeper qualities of things than science can discern.

As we have seen, it is dangerous and inappropriate to try to use science to "prove" scriptural truths, as if Scripture is nothing but a disguised textbook and as if science has final authority. But it is possible to point to scientific data which, combined with reasonable philosophical assumptions, provide good evidence for God's involvement in the natural world. The evidence itself consists of highly specific information found in nature, which cannot reasonably be explained by undirected, physical causes. Two examples of this are the fine-tuning of the laws of nature for complex, intelligent life and the detailed instructions for assembling living creatures found in DNA.

Fine-tuning

Since the 1970's cosmologists have discovered increasing evidence that the physical constants governing the four fundamental laws of nature (gravitation, electromagnetism, and the weak and strong nuclear forces) are not arbitrary, but are finely-tuned to permit a life-friendly universe. For example, as reported by Robin Collins, an expert in the philosophy of physics, "Calculations by Brandon Carter show that if gravity had been stronger or weaker by 1 part in 1040, then life-sustaining stars like the sun could not exist."⁷⁵ Astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez and philosopher Jay Richards also note

⁷⁵ Robin Collins, "The Fine-Tuning Design Argument: A Scientific Argument for the Existence of God," 2, available at: <http://www.discovery.org/a/91>.

how unlikely such stars are given the range of possible values for the forces of gravitation and electromagnetism: "mid-range stars are near the dividing line between convective and radiative energy transport ... a teetering balance between gravity and electromagnetism. If it were shifted one way or the other, main sequence stars would be either all blue or all red."⁷⁶ Similarly, a "change in the (strong) nuclear force strength (the force that binds particles in an atomic nucleus) by more than about half a percent ... would yield a universe with either too much carbon compared with oxygen or vice versa, and thus little if any chance for life."⁷⁷ If the force were significantly weaker or stronger, "no atoms could exist other than hydrogen,"⁷⁸ making life impossible.

These and many other extraordinary cases of fine-tuning have led sober-minded physicists to say some extraordinary things. For example, George Ellis, a British astrophysicist, said:

Amazing fine tuning occurs in the laws that make this [complexity] possible. Realization of the complexity of what is accomplished makes it very difficult not to use the word 'miraculous' without taking a stand as to the ontological status of the word.⁷⁹

Likewise, Arno Penzias, a Nobel-prize winning physicist, said:

Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life, and one which has an underlying (one might say 'supernatural') plan.⁸⁰

Gonzalez and Richards extend this fairly standard fine-tuning argument by noting that our solar system, and particularly the Earth, are also locally fine-tuned to permit life. The Earth is shielded from comets by Jupiter and from the asteroid belt by Mars, and has an unusually large moon, which "stabilizes the rotation axis of its host planet, yielding a more stable, life-friendly climate. Our moon keeps Earth's axial tilt ... from varying over a large range."⁸¹ This prevents climate fluctuations and temperature extremes that life cannot tolerate. In addition, the moon raises the ocean tides "creating the fecund intertidal zone" and is thought to contribute to ocean currents that

⁷⁶ Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards, *The Privileged Planet* (Washington, DC: Regnery Books, 2004), 204.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁷⁸ Robin Collins, "The Fine-Tuning Design Argument," 7.

⁷⁹ George Ellis, "The Anthropic Principle: Laws and Environments," *The Anthropic Principle*, F. Bertola and U. Curi, ed., (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 30.

⁸⁰ Margenau, H. and R.A. Varghese, ed., *Cosmos, Bios, and Theos*. (La Salle, IL, Open Court, 1992), 83.

⁸¹ *The Privileged Planet*, 4.

"regulate the climate by circulating enormous amounts of heat."⁸² According to Gonzalez and Richards, both a larger sun and a smaller one would be less favorable to life. Large suns have rapid changes in luminosity "more likely to lead to drastic climate changes" and generate asteroids; a small sun would brake the rotation of Earth giving it a cold, frozen side and an arid desert side, neither of which are life-friendly.⁸³ Finally, "the host planet ... needs to be about Earth's size to maintain plate tectonics, to keep some land above the oceans, and to retain an atmosphere."⁸⁴ From this it seems that the size, shape and relative location of the earth, sun and moon are fine-tuned for complex life.

Still more amazingly, it appears that the very same conditions that make the earth congenial to life also make it a good place for scientific investigation of the cosmos. The fact that the moon has the same visual size as the sun means that scientists on earth can observe "perfect" eclipses of the sun. In a "super-eclipse," the face of the sun (the photosphere) is covered by an object with a larger visual size. By contrast, a perfect eclipse is a total eclipse where the photosphere is covered by an object of exactly the same visual size and shape, making it possible to investigate the chromosphere and corona. "Of the more than sixty-four moons in our solar system, ours yields the best match to the sun as viewed from the planet's surface ... The sun is some four hundred times farther than the moon, but it is also four hundred times larger. As a result, both bodies appear the same size in our sky."⁸⁵

Beyond that, it turns out that our universe is not a chaotic, confused mass of whirling debris in a state of flux, but is organized into discrete, stable clusters which can be studied independently of one another. As a result, scientists have been able to make progress in discovering simple laws, where newer laws build on the previous ones. Our universe exhibits "linearity and locality," meaning that we can reliably extrapolate from observing a small area to a law which holds throughout the universe.

Linearity and locality are closely related to nature's long-term stability—another prerequisite for life and discovery. Our very ability to establish the laws of nature depends on their stability.⁸⁶

This miracle, that the universe and the human mind are so ordered that scientists can discover beautiful laws was not lost on Einstein, despite the fact that he was neither an orthodox Jew nor a Christian. He wrote that

a priori one should expect a chaotic world which cannot be grasped by the mind in any way ... [T]he kind of order created by Newton's theory of gravitation ... is wholly different. Even

⁸² *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 132–133.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

if the axioms of the theory are proposed by man, the success of such a project presupposes a high degree of ordering of the objective world That is the "miracle" which is being constantly reinforced as our knowledge expands.⁸⁷

So confident has modern science become that its best answers must be rational and beautiful, that even the atheist Nobel prizewinning physicist Steven Weinberg admits that scientists expect to find "beautiful answers" when they study fundamental problems, that the beauty in present theories points to the greater beauty of the final theory and indeed that a final theory would not be accepted "unless it were beautiful."⁸⁸

Of course, none of this is proof, and it is always possible for a skeptic to suggest an alternative explanation. Some argue that fine-tuning is just an "anthropic coincidence," and we should not be surprised that the universe is calibrated to produce intelligent life like us, for only if this were the case would we be here to observe it. This argument misses the point, however, as John Leslie points out.⁸⁹ Suppose I am sentenced to execution by fifty sharpshooters, but to my surprise, they all miss. We would not consider it an adequate explanation of this surprising event to say, "Well, if they hadn't missed, you wouldn't be here to be surprised!" Yes, one must be conscious to be surprised, but that does not explain away the improbability of all those sharpshooters missing. We would look for some act of sabotage, an executive order, or a secret agreement among the sharpshooters (in other words, to intelligent design) to explain this highly improbable event. Likewise, the fact that we would not be here unless the universe were fine-tuned does not make it any less improbable that it is, and offers no explanation of why the fundamental forces of nature take the specific values that they do.

The realization of this fact has led other skeptics to propose the idea of a multiverse, according to which our universe is only one of a large (possibly infinite) number of universes. Given enough universes, almost anything might happen in one of them, and it is no longer so improbable that there is one supporting intelligent life. However, as different, causally isolated regions of space and time, these other universes are necessarily unobservable, and so the idea of a multiverse is untestable and speculative. And, arguably, it also violates Occam's razor⁹⁰ (which says that we should not multiply entities

⁸⁷ Albert Einstein, *Letters to Solovine* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1987), 131.

⁸⁸ Steven Weinberg, *Dreams of a Final Theory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 165.

⁸⁹ John Leslie, "How to Draw Conclusions From a Fine-Tuned Cosmos," in Robert Russell, et al., eds., *Physics, Philosophy and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding* (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory Press, 1988), 304.

⁹⁰ This principle is named for William of Occam (1285–1349), though similar principles of simplicity, such as the idea that nature takes the simplest course, are found in the work of Aristotle, Ptolemy, and Aquinas. Occam's razor is the methodological principle according to which, other things being equal, scientists should prefer the simpler hypothesis. What this means is that we

beyond necessity), since a single, rational God is surely a simpler hypothesis that will explain the available data. In fact, as Robin Collins has pointed out, the idea of a multiverse does not even succeed in explaining away design, because it requires the mechanism of a "universe generator," and

in all current worked-out proposals for what the "universe-generator" could be—such as the oscillating big bang and the vacuum fluctuation models ...—the "generator" itself is governed by a complex set of physical laws that allow it to produce the universes [I]f these laws were slightly different the generator probably would not be able to produce any universes that could sustain life.⁹¹

It is noteworthy that there is no hard evidence for the existence of such a universe-generator. It appears to be postulated not because any data require it, but because it would allow a naturalistic account of cosmology that excludes God. We should remember that resistance to God is not merely a matter of reason, but also a matter of will, a will which in natural man is turned in enmity away from God, and which seeks to efface all evidence of His involvement in the world. As Paul tells us, God has made His attributes plain within nature, but fallen man suppresses that truth (Romans 1:18–20).

Biological information

Origin of life researchers have concluded that life is far different in its complexity than Charles Darwin had thought.⁹² In the 19th century, it was commonly supposed that living cells were undifferentiated blobs of protoplasm, and it did not seem so unlikely that these building blocks could have arisen spontaneously from inorganic chemicals. Since the discovery of DNA, however, it has become clear that every living cell contains elaborate instructions for the construction and regulation of proteins and protein machines. Just as the finely tuned constants of physics contain information that structures a life-friendly universe, so DNA contains information necessary to build and maintain living systems. In the natural world, a key difference between living and non-living systems is that the former exhibit specified complexity: not only are they highly complex, but that complexity is specified by the independent functional requirements of life. The British chemist and origin of life researcher Leslie Orgel explains:

Living organisms are distinguished by their specified complexity. Crystals ... fail to qualify as living because they lack

should not "multiply entities beyond necessity," postulating more entities than are required to explain the phenomena.

⁹¹ Collins, "The Fine-Tuning Design Argument," 10.

⁹² For an excellent history of origin of life studies and a rigorous argument in favor of design, see Stephen C. Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009).

complexity; mixtures of random polymers fail to qualify because they lack specificity.⁹³

The information in DNA is expressed in terms of four nucleotide bases, adenine, thymine, cytosine and guanine (abbreviated A, T, C, G), which represent a digital code analogous to the binary code of 0 and 1 used in a computer's machine language. Scientists discovered that these bases are not arranged in repeating sequences, but are highly "aperiodic" (non-repeating) like the sentences in a book. Further, when considering every possible sequence of these bases, it became clear that most would produce a non-functional result, which would not support a viable system.⁹⁴ Thus in living systems,

The nucleotide base sequences in the coding regions of DNA are highly specific relative to the independent functional requirements of protein function, protein synthesis, and cellular life.⁹⁵

It is generally agreed that there are just four possible types of explanation for this information: chance, necessity, a combination of chance and necessity, and design. Of these, chance has been roundly rejected because of the staggering complexity of even the simplest possible living organism:

recent theoretical and experimental work on the so-called minimal complexity required to sustain the simplest possible living organism suggests a lower bound of some 250 to 400 genes and their corresponding proteins. The nucleotide sequence-space corresponding to such a system of proteins exceeds 4,300,000. The improbability corresponding to this measure of molecular complexity again vastly exceeds ... the "probabilistic resources" of the entire universe.⁹⁶

This is not surprising because in our experience chance has a very limited ability to produce coherent information: we might be fortunate enough to extract a short word out of the Scrabble bag, but even with a large number of tries we cannot reasonably expect to produce one of Shakespeare's sonnets.

⁹³ L. E. Orgel, *The Origins of Life on Earth* (New York: John Wiley, 1973), 189.

⁹⁴ Pursuing a Darwinian paradigm, many scientists expected the human genome to be full of non-coding "junk DNA," non-functional souvenirs of our evolutionary history. However, this assumption has been discredited by the discovery that the DNA is not "junk" but helps in such important processes as regulating genes and cell division. See "Identification and analysis of functional elements in 1% of the human genome by the ENCODE pilot project," *Nature*, 447 (14 June 2007), 799-816; "Exploring 'Junk DNA' in the Genome," *Science Daily*, June 16, 2007, <<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/06/070615091210.htm>>; Jonathan Wells, *The Myth of Junk DNA* (Seattle: Discovery Institute Press, 2011).

⁹⁵ Stephen C. Meyer, "DNA and the Origin of Life: Information, Specification, and Explanation," in eds. John Angus Campbell and Stephen C. Meyer, *Darwinism, Design, and Public Education* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2003), 236.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 243.

Necessity (or "self-organization") claims that laws alone suffice to explain life, which would mean that some chemical law dictates the sequences of nucleotide bases. This also is highly implausible because laws are capable only of explaining repeating patterns (repeating events like thermal expansion, or repeating structures like crystals). However, in order for the sequences of nucleotide bases to serve as assembly instructions for functional, living systems, it is essential that they are not repetitive. If the nucleotide bases interacted by chemical necessity, "DNA would contain sequences awash in repetition or redundancy—much like the arrangement of atoms in crystals."⁹⁷

What about the idea that chance and necessity could be combined to account for the information in living systems? What this really means is that natural selection can be applied before life appears (there are chance variations, some of which are favored by the law of natural selection), but natural selection can only operate on self-replicating, living systems—so this idea assumes the very thing it has to explain. As Theodosius Dobzhansky said, "prebiological natural selection is a contradiction in terms."⁹⁸

Since these appear to exhaust the naturalistic resources for explaining life, it becomes reasonable to consider design. Yet the case for design is not simply negative (natural causes appear to be inadequate), which might seem like a "God of the gaps" argument from ignorance.⁹⁹ Rather, it is also a fact of our experience that various objects which exhibit specified complexity—such as computers, scientific theories, and novels—are regularly produced by intelligent agents and not by unintelligent causes. If intelligent agents have the known causal power to produce such artifacts, but unintelligent causes cannot do so, then if we see systems in nature that resemble these artifacts in their specified complexity, it is reasonable to infer an intelligent cause. Of course, it takes more argument (particularly philosophical argument) to make the case that this designer is God.

It is interesting that even some atheist intellectuals find the complex specified information in every living cell too much for undirected causes to explain. Antony Flew renounced his lifelong atheism in large part because "the findings of more than fifty years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design."¹⁰⁰ Likewise,

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁹⁸ Theodosius Dobzhansky, "Discussion of G. Schramm's Paper," in *The Origins of Prebiological Systems and of Their Molecular Matrices*, ed. S. W. Fox (New York: Academic Press, 1965), 310.

⁹⁹ The "God of the gaps" argument as referenced here and elsewhere in the document refers to the logical fallacy that a "gap" in human understanding of some aspect of the natural world can be posited as "proof" for the existence and activity of God.

¹⁰⁰ Antony Flew and Gary Habermas, "My Pilgrimage from Atheism to Theism: An Exclusive Interview with Former British Atheist Professor Antony Flew," 5, available at: <http://www.biola.edu/antonyflew/flew-interview.pdf>.

atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel rejects the reductive materialism of neo-Darwinism in part because of the complexity of all life:

[T]he coming into existence of the genetic code—an arbitrary mapping of nucleotide sequences into amino acids, together with mechanisms that can read the code and carry out its instructions—seems particularly resistant to being revealed as probable given physical law alone.¹⁰¹

On the other hand, Anthony Flew only became a deist and, so far as we know, never embraced Christianity. And Nagel still holds out for the idea of "immanent teleology," according to which what drives the cosmos toward living, conscious, rational and moral beings are goal-directed processes fully within nature. This shows that, without the significant addition of philosophical principles, scientific "design arguments" have a limited ability to make the case for God. And even with those principles in place, a case for theism does not disclose who that God is. Without the clarity of revelation, therefore, the natural man is liable to shape the divine being in his own, idolatrous image.

Yet, by highlighting the role of information in structuring the cosmos and its inhabitants, design is richly suggestive of a God that governs the universe through His Word, and who is actively holding all things (cosmological and biological) together. While this science needs to be supplemented by a well-conceived theology of nature, it does provide materials congenial to a worthwhile, and sometimes mutually reinforcing, dialogue between faith and science.

7. Image of God theology and Christian anthropology

Reductive materialism attempted not only to replace a world charged with the grandeur of God with a purposeless machine, but also, and in a similar way, to redefine human beings. No longer are they conceived as embodied, rational souls made in the image of God. Rather, in the tradition of Julien Offray de la Mettrie (1709–1751), humans are thought to be no more than organic machines. Similarly, for Richard Dawkins, a living creature is simply "a survival machine for genes," and that includes us: "Next time you look in the mirror, just think: that is what you are too."¹⁰²

Just as the impact of reductive materialism on the cosmos requires a fresh, Christocentric theology of creation, so its impact on human nature requires a similar theological response. Perhaps the most valuable resource here is careful articulation of image of God theology. The implications of this doctrine are sometimes neglected in Lutheran circles, because the Lutheran Confessions

¹⁰¹ Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, 10.

¹⁰² Richard Dawkins, *The Magic of Reality: How We Know What Is Really True* (New York: The Free Press, 2011), 74–75.

typically speak of the image of God in the narrow sense of *original righteousness*, which was lost in the Fall. This original righteousness was a gift that enabled our "knowledge of God, fear of God, and confidence in God."¹⁰³ But on account of the inherited sickness that is original sin, we "not only lack fear and trust in God, but also do not even have the power or gifts to produce fear and trust in God."¹⁰⁴ Since this has been lost, the image of God might seem irrelevant to understanding fallen human beings. However, as Nathan Jastram argues at length, Scripture also speaks of the image of God in a broader sense (humans are like God in various ways), and shows that in this sense, the image of God still remains.¹⁰⁵ For example, we learn that even after the fall, it is wrong to slaughter other humans like animals because the former are made in the image of God (Gen. 9:6).

What difference does it make to think that human beings are specially made in the image of God and still retain important remnants of that image? For one thing, it is clear that God provides us with special gifts so that we can serve as stewards of the rest of the world. This includes the intellectual and moral gifts required to practice science within God-pleasing boundaries, as we cannot steward nature effectively if we do not know how it works and what purpose it serves. If we unpack the various gifts presupposed by our stewardship obligations, we find an amazing range of competencies that go far beyond what is required merely to survive.

In order to carry out their obligations, stewards must persist as moral agents over time and be aware of that fact, so that they can plan and implement solutions to stewardship problems. While many animals are aware of items in their environment (such as food, predators, and mates), they do not seem able to conceive of themselves as persisting over time. This surely explains why they lack the sustained ability to transform the environment for the sake of long-term goals (farming, construction of permanent housing, transportation networks, etc.). It is also why none of these creatures appear to do anything like human science. Scientists must conceive of themselves as persisting over time. They can develop theoretical and technological solutions to problems, design experiments, and test their theories. These projects take time and presuppose that the investigator attempting to solve a problem is the same as the one who previously recognized the problem. They are also part of longer term projects, such as optimizing bandwidth for electronic communication, improving average fuel economy, eliminating malaria, or curing cancer.

Easy to overlook is that in order to be a steward of creation, one must have a concept of the natural world as distinct from oneself. While aware of

¹⁰³ "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," Article II (Original Sin), KW, 114.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁰⁵ Nathan Jastram, "Man as Male and Female: Created in the Image of God," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 68: 1 (January, 2004): 5–96.

specific objects in their immediate environment, the most intelligent animals still seem to have no concept of nature as a whole. It does not seem plausible that they have ever entertained the cosmological argument for God—in part because they have no concept of the cosmos as the totality of physical reality which they inhabit. Humans are dramatically different, and from before the time of Aristotle until the present, they have been very interested in cosmology. To be sure, the skeptical philosopher David Hume (1711–1776) poured scorn on the idea that humans could understand the cosmos:

[E]ven if we do take the operations of one part of nature on another as our basis for judgment about the origin of the whole world (which is something we should never do), why would we select as our basis such a tiny, weak, limited cause as the reason and design of animals on this planet seems to be? This little agitation of the brain that we call 'thought'—what special privilege does it have that entitles it to serve as the model of the whole universe?¹⁰⁶

However, Christian philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) anticipated and exposed a fallacy in Hume's critique of human capacities:

Through space the universe grasps me and swallows me up like a speck; through thought I grasp it.¹⁰⁷

Hume confuses *physical* limitations of the human thinker's body with *cognitive* limitations of the thinker's mind. The fact that our thought is correlated with a "little agitation of the brain" does not prevent us from thinking about the "whole universe." It might be noted that Hume himself has to assume we are capable of doing this in order to make his critique of theistic arguments, since he attempts to offer alternative explanations of the cosmos. This is why, of all creatures on earth, only human beings can consider why the universe came into existence, and ponder the significance of its apparent fine-tuning for intelligent life. Clearly God has provided humans with sufficiently powerful minds that we can think of the entire creation He entrusted to us.

In this sense we are like God—which is, unfortunately, also the root of our temptation to reach up and claim to be God. The godlike scope of human thought can tempt some people, including scientists, to believe that they can completely understand and control reality by themselves: the lure of Babel remains strong (Gen. 11:1–9). But Scripture reminds us that although in *some* ways our capacity for thought is godlike, we are not God, and our thoughts can never ascend to His heights.

¹⁰⁶ David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfs/hume1779.pdf> (Copyright 2010–2015, Jonathan Bennett), Part 2, 13.

¹⁰⁷ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), #113, 59.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways. (Is. 55:8–9)

As Jastram has argued,¹⁰⁸ this means that though humans are like God, they are called to a "middle road,"¹⁰⁹ with a proper balance of confidence and humility.¹¹⁰ On the one hand, as image-bearers called to steward the rest of God's earthly creation, we can be confident that we are capable of doing science well enough to care for the world and to serve our neighbor. But, on the other hand, our intellectual gifts only enable us to grasp and control the contingent, temporal order of nature. They do not help us to discern the ultimate reason why things are as they are.

Stewardship is a mandate to care for things *below* us, a mandate for those specially made in the image of God to care for all the other living and non-living creations *not* so made, and to preserve and develop that trust for the sake of present and future generations. It is not a mandate to reach *above* us and supplant God's role in providing guidance and salvation. Nor does it authorize us to treat other people made in the image of God as if they were merely part of the rest of creation which lacks that image. That is what is fundamentally wrong about seeing another human being merely as a collection of cells or organs that might be harvested for some other purpose.

The image of God is also reflected in our ability to know the particular kinds of creature we are called to husband. In the beginning, Adam was allowed to name the creatures (Gen. 2:19), and it is arguable that these names were not arbitrary but reflected natural kinds.¹¹¹ At any rate, scientists have since developed detailed classificatory schemes for both the living and non-living environment (e.g., taxonomies into phyla and species and the periodic table of elements). For example, Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), revered as the father of modern biological taxonomy, was the son of a Lutheran pastor, and his scientific work in botany and zoology was motivated by a profound belief in the orderliness of God's creation. Scientists have also used observation and reason to discern regularities and laws that allow the effective prediction and control of natural events, and the ability to synthesize useful compounds and develop labor-saving technologies.

¹⁰⁸ Nathan Jastram, "Scientists Called to Be Like God," in ed. Angus Menuge, *Reading God's World: The Scientific Vocation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 243–269.

¹⁰⁹ In this context, the phrase is due to Stanley Jaki, *The Road of Science and the Ways to God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 87.

¹¹⁰ Consider the case of a skilled surgeon whose abilities enable him or her to treat successfully medical crises that would have been impossible a generation ago. Yet, not every operation is a success.

¹¹¹ This was Luther's opinion. For discussion, see Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*, 249.

Among all God's earthly creatures, only human beings can know what nature is and what particular kinds of things are found there, so that these natural resources can be used to fulfill the so-called "cultural mandate" (Gen. 1:28), which allows humans to develop nature into culture to serve their needs and purposes. However, we are not authorized to do this in just any way. Stewardship of nature is a trust, not an unrestricted gift. Our stewardship vocation is not a license to ravage and despoil nature. We do not own it: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1); we are only caretakers, and together with our intellectual gifts, God also provides the moral capacities required to fulfill our obligation to be wise stewards. Here it is significant that the Noahic covenant God makes after the flood is made between God, human beings and "every living creature" (Gen. 9:8–11). Although these other creatures are not image-bearers and may be used for food (Gen. 9:1–3), still they were created good (Gen. 1:25) and therefore have intrinsic value, not merely instrumental value for our purposes. It is unwarranted to damage the non-human environment without need, not only because it harms future generations of people who depend on it, but because it shows disrespect for the value of a world God made good.

Here again, it is clear that humans are different from the most intelligent animals. Since these animals do not conceive of themselves as rational agents persisting over time, they cannot grasp moral rules that apply to their conduct over time.¹¹² Humans can understand such rules and hence have stewardship obligations that no other creature has. It really is up to us to use the world wisely for the sake of posterity.

As with a theology of nature, a developed theological anthropology can also find support in independent evidences. While Scripture's authority is inherent, it can aid the apologetic task to urge those who reject it to consider the scientific evidences and philosophical arguments which support our being made in the image of God. For example, neuroscientist Mario Beauregard and science journalist Denyse O'Leary have thoroughly exposed the poor science lying behind attempts to reduce the mind to the brain and to reduce religious experience to the product of malfunctioning "God spots" in the brain.¹¹³ And eminent philosopher J. P. Moreland provides a rigorous defense of several characteristics of human beings that evidence their being specially made in the image of God, including the character of their consciousness, the nature of rationality, and their access to moral norms.¹¹⁴

¹¹² See Richard Taylor, *Ethics, Faith and Reason* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985), 14.

¹¹³ Mario Beauregard and Denyse O'Leary, *The Spiritual Brain: A Neuroscientist's Case for the Existence of the Soul* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

¹¹⁴ J. P. Moreland, *The Recalcitrant Imago Dei* (London: SCM Press, 2009). Other excellent works in this area include Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, eds., *Naturalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) and Mark Baker and Stewart Goetz, eds., *The Soul Hypothesis* (New York: Con-

8. The theological underpinnings of modern science

We have seen that Christian theology provides a coherent rationale for doing science, conceived as a stewardship vocation, and that human beings are equipped to carry out that vocation as those made in the image of God. At a deeper level, Christian theology also provides the intellectual and moral foundation for supposing that science is a worthwhile project. It is easy to imagine that science simply developed as an extension of human curiosity and that it has little to do with background worldview. To the contrary, as many scholars have pointed out, most worldviews are *not* congenial to the idea that science is a feasible or valuable project.¹¹⁵ As a matter of historical fact, it was Christian theology that provided the presuppositions that supported the rise of modern science.¹¹⁶

The feasibility of science

The idea that nature can be systematically investigated presupposes that it makes coherent sense, that there are some overarching rules or laws that explain its operation. Animism and pantheism discourage this idea because nature is viewed as a storehouse of local and capricious deities, so there is no reason to expect general principles or uniformities. By contrast, the Christian idea that nature is a book inscribed with a *logos* by a single author encouraged scientists to believe that there were rationally comprehensible, universal laws of nature. This understanding of the scientific task was explicit in the writings of some of the great founders of modern science. Thus Galileo wrote that science "is written in this grand book, the universe . . . in the language of mathematics."¹¹⁷ Likewise, Johannes Kepler and Robert Boyle saw nature as a book inscribed with mathematical laws.¹¹⁸ And, as the eminent historian of science John Hedley Brooke points out, these scientists assumed that the same *logos* at work in nature was also reflected in the reason of beings made in God's image.¹¹⁹ This encouraged scientists to think that their minds were sufficiently attuned to the natural world that they could interpret and read

tinuum, 2011) and Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, *A Brief History of the Soul* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

¹¹⁵ For an excellent comparative analysis of the impact of various worldviews, see Stanley Jaki, *The Savior of Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). He shows how a variety of philosophical and theological rivals to Christianity lead to stagnation and "still births" that obstruct scientific progress.

¹¹⁶ See Nancy Pearcey and Charles Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994) and many of the essays in *Reading God's World*, ed. Angus Menuge.

¹¹⁷ Galileo Galilei, "The Assayer," in *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, trans. Stillman Drake (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 237f.

¹¹⁸ Harrison, "Priests of the Most High God," 73–74.

¹¹⁹ John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 19.

the text, discovering the laws of its operation. Without this idea that the rationality of nature and our minds reflect the same *logos*, with a common source in the mind of God, it might be as if nature were written in German, while humans could only think in French. As Pearcey concludes, “the doctrine of the creation (of the world and the human mind) provided the basic ontological and epistemological presuppositions for the scientific enterprise.”¹²⁰

More than that, important theological doctrines made a difference in the way the natural text was read. Following Aristotle, many scientists had supposed that science proceeds by discerning the essence of things, which will then tell us how they must operate. This encourages the idea that we can anticipate nature’s course through metaphysical analysis rather than by observation and experiment. Without testing ideas against nature, many erroneous ideas were developed such as the idea that falling rocks “want” to reach their natural resting place. The decisive turn to the empirical method of modern science was inspired by the theological doctrine of *divine voluntarism*: as a free, transcendent agent, God governs the world as He chooses. Since God’s thoughts and ways are above our own, and an infinite, perfect God may choose what finite, fallen beings would not expect, we are well-advised to go and see what the Lord has done. Since the natural text is the free creation of God, our goal should not be anticipation of its meaning (that risks *eisegesis*), but simply to discern what that text actually says (*exegesis*). As Peter Harrison argues at length, this approach was strongly encouraged by the Reformers’ emphasis on the literal meaning of Scripture, a hermeneutic that was transferred over to the reading of the natural text.¹²¹

Kepler was also inspired in his search for cosmological laws by the idea that God provides for His creatures in reliable ways because He is a promise-keeper. Though God is free, He is not arbitrary and capricious. Out of love, He provides a stable and intelligible world. He can and does sometimes do miracles so that what usually happens turns out differently. Most of the time, however, He governs the world through predictable ordinances. Thus, in his astronomical work, Kepler “believed that he had discovered the part of God’s providential plan that embodies the pattern of the cosmos, and the divine laws by which God regulated its moving parts.”¹²² To be sure, we now know that Kepler’s “laws” are only approximations to the truth, and the history of science shows that even the most successful theories of the past are superseded and shown to be valid only in certain domains or under certain assumptions. This again illustrates the fact that good science involves a balance between legitimate confidence and proper humility. We are like God, but we are not transcendent over creation, and our will is not His will. So we must

¹²⁰ Pearcey, “How Science Became a Christian Vocation,” 42.

¹²¹ Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*.

¹²² Peter Barker and Bernard Goldstein, “Theological Foundations of Kepler’s Astronomy,” *Osis* 16 (2001), 113.

buckle down and use our gifts to discover *something* of how God governs this world, realizing that it is most likely only part of the truth. For in science as in all things, our lot in this life is to “know in part,” as “in a mirror dimly” (1 Cor. 13:12), due to our finite, fallen limitations.

The value of science

Science is not only feasible: it is worth doing. As we have seen, science naturally flows from the cultural mandate to shape nature into culture. But there are also more specific reasons Christians with the appropriate gifts can and should do science. Science is inherently worthwhile because God created the world good: the world is full of things worth knowing about. Science is also a way of glorifying God, by showing His marvelous handiwork. It provides a storehouse of evidence for God’s existence that can be marshaled by natural theologians and Christian apologists.

But above all, science is a vehicle of thought through which human beings are enabled to love and serve their neighbor. First, through science, we have developed all manner of products which improve our quality of life. It is hard to imagine (or to want to imagine) a world without vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, furnaces, air conditioners, washing machines, telephones, televisions, and computers.

Second, science helps us to do something to mitigate the consequences of the Fall. We cannot heal the universal, hereditary infection of sin. But we can use scientific discoveries to ameliorate human suffering. Whole classes of disease can sometimes be eradicated from the world, and even when they cannot, science allows dramatic improvements in the quality and quantity of earthly life for the sick. We cannot extinguish the corrupt desire to treat other human beings as tools and possessions, which explains the rise of the “new slavery” even as we celebrate the abolition of older forms.¹²³ But we can drastically improve the living and working conditions of many people through improved housing, clean water and labor-saving technology. And even when it is the misuse of science which leads to problems (such as many of our environmental problems, like toxic waste), still, science will likely play an important part in any effective response.

Christianity provides powerful moral motivations for doing science because it sees that in all things, Christians are called to love others as God first loved them (1 John 4:7–12). This love is not merely words or a feeling, but is found in concrete actions of service. We love one another in and through our vocations, including the scientific vocation. Indeed, as Veith reminds us, it is really God at work in us, loving and serving our neighbor.¹²⁴ The scientist,

¹²³ See Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*, rev. ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012).

¹²⁴ Gene Edward Veith, *God at Work*.

like other workers, is God’s instrument, providing services that help to preserve the world and meet our neighbor’s temporal needs.

Yet science is not everything, and the Christian scientist is only one member of the body of Christ which includes many other members with different but critically important functions. It may be the scientist who develops a new strain of wheat. But when that scientist drives to the store to buy a loaf of bread made using that wheat, he still relies on farmers, truck drivers, bakers, and store clerks (not to mention automotive and road construction workers). Even if scientists are, in some respects, “smarter” than other people, and can claim to be the “eyes” of a modern, technological society, while these other workers are merely its hands, still (drawing on St. Paul’s vivid analogy for the church as a “body”): “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’” (1 Cor. 12:21). Reflection on our creaturely interdependence in God’s economy is a good antidote to the inflated veneration some give to scientists. Without the scientist, the farmer might have a poorer yield. But without the farmer, the scientist would most likely starve. So the Christian scientist should see his or her work realistically, as an important, God-pleasing opportunity to contribute to a diverse, interdependent community of many other workers. All Christians together, regardless of our various vocations, are called to “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:15–16).

Chapter II

Historical Context

1. Introduction

Despite the tremendous resources which theology affords scientific inquiry, we see today a stunning disconnect between faith and science. At best, faith provides encouragement to do scientific work honestly and well, which is a good thing, but it has nothing to say about the deeper meaning of that work. This is due to two major and closely related movements of secularization. During the Enlightenment, reason was transformed from a servant of the faith to an autonomous judge of objective reality, and nature was transformed from a divine work of providence to an autonomous world machine. How did we lose the sense that nature is *God’s world* and that reason is *God’s gift* to understand it? That is the focus of this chapter. The aim is to give a brief, historical account that explains how we arrived at the default perception of the relation between science and faith predominant today.

The story begins with the revolt against Aristotle (384–322 BC), and in particular his appeal to final causes. Aristotelian metaphysics recognized four causes: the material cause (what is something made of?), the formal cause (what is its structure, shape or form?), the efficient cause (what produced the effect or made it come into being?) and the final cause (for what purpose was it brought into being?). A simple illustration is given by the chef’s preparation of a dinner. The material cause of the dinner is all of the ingredients. The formal cause is the recipe for combining those ingredients which accounts for the form of the final product. The efficient cause is the cook himself, as without him the dinner would never come into existence. And the final cause (the goal or purpose of all this) is to provide the dish requested by the guest. As modern science arose, the idea that science could discern the final cause (the goal or purpose) of natural events was increasingly viewed with skepticism. For example, did science really have to speculate on the goal or purpose of burning wood in order to understand how wood burns?

Many of those who criticized the appeal to final causes in science (like Galileo, Bacon, and Descartes), continued to believe that nature was God’s other book, but over time, that critique inspired others to outright attack on the natural theology which claimed to read that book’s messages (section 2). Increasingly, thinkers of the Enlightenment encouraged a diminished reverence for revelation and believed that our own faculties were sufficient for understanding nature. This led to the rise of autonomous, universal reason (section 3). Combining this view of reason with the rejection of natural theology, nature itself came to seem a self-sufficient, Newtonian world-machine

(section 4). At first this was usually combined with a belief in a remote deity who started the whole system in motion (deism), but as time went on, God seemed redundant even in that capacity. It appeared to many that the only thing necessary to understand any natural phenomenon was some other natural phenomenon that caused it. This fueled *naturalism*, according to which either nature is all there is—*philosophical naturalism*—or, if there is something more, like God, still He is irrelevant to understanding the natural world—*methodological naturalism* (section 5). With this foundation in place, it no longer seemed appropriate to speak of scientists as “priests in the book of nature.” Increasingly, science was not viewed as a vocation. Instead, it was seen as a *profession* in the contemporary, secular sense: a scientist is a functionary in the modern, industrial state (section 6). So the severing of nature from God’s providential care and of reason from divine illumination yielded science as a non-vocation. This has done damage not only to faithful scientists, who experience *angst* because they do not see how to relate their faith to their work in meaningful ways, but also to the general public, who suffer from a disconnect between what is most valuable to them, and what they can claim to be fact. It is one of the many reasons that the default belief system of many religious people in countries like America today is what leading sociologist of religion Christian Smith dubs “moralistic therapeutic deism”¹²⁵; God has been evacuated from nature and almost all of life, hanging on only as a therapeutic life coach if times get bad (section 7).

2. The attack on final causes and the decline of natural theology

In surveying his philosophical predecessors, Aristotle discerned a gap in the type of causes they discussed.¹²⁶ Many fixated on material and efficient causes. For example Thales (625–545 BC) suggested that everything was made of water while Empedocles (490–430 BC) suggested Earth, Air, Fire and Water for material causes and Love and Strife for efficient causes. A few thinkers realized that one must also account for the shape or structure of the outcome (formal causes). Thus Pythagoras (570–495 BC) suggested that nature is governed by an underlying mathematical harmony (an idea which, much later, the Lutheran astronomer Johannes Kepler [1571–1630] saw as deeply congruent with the Christian idea of a world governed by a rational Lawgiver). But none of them, thought Aristotle, had considered the most important causes of all, those that provided the purpose or goal of things (final causes). The idea of final causes dominated subsequent thought during the scholastic period, and even many thinkers of the modern period, such as

¹²⁵ Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*.

¹²⁶ See Antony Kenny, *A New History of Ancient Philosophy, Volume 1: Ancient Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), chapters 2 and 6.

William Paley (1743–1805), saw its value for natural theology.¹²⁷ However, natural theologians were concerned that Aristotle’s own scheme, which located final causes within nature, was not compatible with God’s sovereign rule over creation. For example, as early as the 13th century, Etienne Tempier, the Bishop of Paris, expressed his recognition that the Aristotelian account of Forms, as natures within substances that dictated their final purpose, would abridge God’s freedom to govern creation as He saw fit.

In 1277 Etienne Tempier... issued a condemnation of several theses derived from Aristotelianism.... The condemnation of 1277 helped inspire a form a theology known as voluntarism, which admits no limitations on God’s power. It regarded natural law not as Forms inherent *within* nature but as divine commands imposed from *outside* nature.¹²⁸

At the same time, some natural theologians supposed, not without reason, that the created world was designed to support those made in God’s image, and so they attempted to read off God’s final causes for things from their evident benefits to humanity.

No doubt this led some natural theologians to forget that God made all things good—so that all of nature has an intrinsic value regardless of whether it serves human interests. But it was very helpful in some areas of science, including medicine. For example, Walter Charleton’s (1619–1707) study of the uses of blood, respiration, and muscles assumed that these structures existed for a purpose: “Walter Charleton, sometime physician to Charles I, spoke of ‘The Uses of the Blood,’ ‘The Final Cause, or Use of Respiration,’ ‘the Use of the Muscles.’”¹²⁹ Likewise, William Harvey’s (1578–1657) investigation of the heart assumed that it had a discernible function. End-directed thinking was vitally important not only in anatomical studies like Charleton’s and Harvey’s but also in the history of botany and zoology, as shown by the pioneering work in taxonomy by John Ray (1627–1705), and Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778). The work of these scientists was strongly guided by their natural theological beliefs in an ordered, purposive creation. As Peter Harrison concludes, “The search for divine purposes in the natural order provided a clear religious warrant for a pursuit that might otherwise have been regarded as the accumulation of vain and futile knowledge.”¹³⁰ Today, and despite the fact that final causes are typically rejected by science, they are still a useful

¹²⁷ Paley’s most famous work is *Natural Theology or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*, published in 1802.

¹²⁸ Nancy Pearcey and Charles Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 31.

¹²⁹ Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*, 170, italics in the original.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

construct for understanding complex, biological systems. As even the contemporary naturalistic philosopher of biology Michael Ruse concedes:

We treat organisms...as if they were manufactured, as if they were designed, and then try to work out their functions. End-directed thinking—teleological thinking—is appropriate in biology because, and only because, organisms seem as if they were manufactured, as if they had been created by an intelligence and put to work.¹³¹

On the other hand, some natural theology over-reached by claiming to read God’s intentions directly from a beneficial consequence that might be a coincidence. For example, Noël-Antoine Pluche (1688–1761) went so far as to claim that

the woodworm, which eats the hull of ships, actually contributes to harmonious international relations, for it provides opportunities for some countries to sell to others pitch with which to protect ships’ hulls: ‘Thus does this little Animal, which we so much complain of as being troublesome and injurious to us, become the very Cement which unites these distant nations in one common Interest.’¹³²

This is a nice story, but is there any way to test it? And has God Himself revealed to us that this is the real reason for the woodworm? The answer to both questions is negative. It is at this point that appeal to final causes invites fanciful speculations that cannot be checked against hard evidence. More cautious natural theologians, similar to today’s proponents of Intelligent Design, realize that one should carefully distinguish between inferring design and inferring intention. An archaeologist may discover an item which is obviously designed—an artifact of some sort—without immediately knowing *why* it was made. For example, an item in the shape of a blade might be a utensil, a tool for working leather or wood, a weapon, or a ceremonial item with no ordinary use. Likewise, with the invention of the microscope, many saw evidence of a world brimming with design long before they had any knowledge of what microorganisms do.

[T]he microscope was able to show that even the most modest of creatures had been designed with a remarkable precision... and the world of minute creatures came to exercise a unique fascination over seventeenth-century minds.¹³³

¹³¹ Michael Ruse, *Darwin and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 268.

¹³² Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*, 175. The embedded quote is from Noël Pluche himself, *Spécul de la Nature: or Nature Display’d*, 5th revised and corrected edition, volume III (London: 1770), 318.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 172–173.

It was only later that the pioneering work of Ignaz Semmelweis (1818–1865) and Louis Pasteur (1822–1895) established that some microorganisms are responsible for disease, and saw the need for disinfectant and the sterilization of medical instruments. And it was not until the twentieth century that the incredible complexity within each living cell was uncovered.

The entire cell can be viewed as a factory that contains an elaborate network of interlocking assembly lines, each of which is composed of a set of large protein machines. Why do we call the large protein assemblies...machines? Precisely because, like the machines invented by humans...these protein assemblies contain highly coordinated moving parts.¹³⁴

The tendency of some natural theologians to claim too much—to peer further into providence than fallen man is capable of—led some to be skeptical of the whole approach. And there was a concern that if all of nature reflected God’s design, this would make God complicit in the natural evils of predation, parasitism and disease.¹³⁵ As Cornelius Hunter has argued, Darwin and others who were skeptical of natural theology objected to design (or final causes) at least in part for theological rather than scientific reasons, because of a conviction that God would not be intimately involved in conforming such an imperfect world to His purposes.¹³⁶ Apparently, there was insufficient attention paid to how the Fall complicates our understanding of design in the world: we are not seeing the world as God originally intended it to be, since creation itself is distorted, subject to the Fall’s effects (Rom. 8:20–21). Our own faculties are also prone to error in judging how God “ought” to have done something.¹³⁷ While some proponents of natural theology undoubtedly claimed too much, Hunter argues that the theological assumption that God is not actively at work in His world may have led scientists to the opposite extreme: have they developed a naturalistic “blind spot” that makes it impossible to infer design no matter what the evidence.¹³⁸

Even before Darwin, it seemed to many of the early modern philosophers and scientists that appeal to final causes was liable to anthropomorphic

¹³⁴ Bruce Alberts, “The Cell as a Collection of Protein Machines: Preparing the Next Generation of Molecular Biologists,” *Cell*, vol. 92 (1998), 291.

¹³⁵ For example, Charles Darwin wrote to Asa Gray on the 22nd of May, 1860: “I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent & omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice.” Available at: <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/entry-2814>.

¹³⁶ Cornelius Hunter, *Darwin’s God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil* (Ada, MI: Brazos Press, 2002).

¹³⁷ Since death came through the Fall, nature before the Fall would have been quite different than it is presently.

¹³⁸ Cornelius Hunter, *Science’s Blind Spot: The Unseen Religion of Scientific Naturalism* (Ada, MI: Brazos Press, 2007).

speculation and was in any case unnecessary for empirical science. Thus, quite early in the scientific revolution, Francis Bacon (1561–1626) argued that humans have a tendency to project their own agency onto the world, supposing that a being like themselves is the ultimate explanation of anything mysterious:

As it strives to go further, [the human mind] falls back on things that are more familiar, namely final causes, which are plainly derived from the nature of man rather than of the universe....¹³⁹

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) made much the same point in critiquing the use of final causes in dynamics:

[M]en measure, not only other men, but all other things, by themselves; and because they find themselves subject after motion to pain, and lassitude, think everything else grows weary of motion and seeks repose of its own accord.¹⁴⁰

It was not only materialist philosophers like Hobbes, but also Christian scientists, such as Galileo (1564–1642) and Robert Boyle (1627–1691), who worried that it was inadvisable to read final causes into nature. Their concern, like Etienne Tempier's, was that if final causes were understood as implanted within nature, this would threaten God's sovereignty. For if these causes operate independently of God, then apparently not even He can alter their effects. By contrast, if God is free to direct nature as He sees fit, and these final causes remain under the governance of His will, then science must adopt a humble, empirical method, content to discover what God has chosen to do in the natural world.

Thus, Galileo (1564–1642) believed that the only way to discover the Law of Descent governing the rate of acceleration of objects in free-fall was by empirical testing.¹⁴¹ One had to look and see how God had chosen to govern the world, rather than speculate *a priori* on the supposed essential natures of the falling objects. Boyle argued that matter is in itself completely passive, unable to give an ultimate account of its motion, and that it was also affected by non-mechanical "active principles," which he thought were involved in some chemical reactions and life processes. In this way, God was the final cause of all motion in the world and was also immanently involved in it, via these active principles.¹⁴²

For Boyle, in both the case of matter and active principles, God works through means. Standard physical science (e.g., typical physics and

¹³⁹ Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, Bk. I, XLVIII.

¹⁴⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan* 1.2 in Works, ed. William Molesworth (Aalen: Scientia, 1962) III, 3 f.

¹⁴¹ For details, see chapter 6 of Rom Harré's *Great Scientific Experiments: Twenty Experiments that Changed our View of the World* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002).

¹⁴² See Pearcey and Thaxton, *The Soul of Science*, 87–88 and Angus Menuge, "Interpreters of the Book of Nature," in Menuge, ed., *Reading God's World*.

chemistry) is focused on these means (secondary causes) and so has no need to appeal to primary final causes. But since biology is interested in the origin of life, it pushes us beyond secondary causes. This explains why Boyle thought final causes had no value in understanding ordinary physical causation, and yet at the same time was an enthusiastic supporter of the argument for divine design in biology.¹⁴³ He realized that passive matter does not itself explain its complex, functional organization in the organs and body plans of living beings. For this, only the primary, final causation of God would suffice. The ultimate reason that such organization exists is that God designed it for a purpose.

Although it had a number of rationales, a tragic consequence of the well-intended exclusion of final causes from science, quite often advanced by Christians and on theological grounds, was a weakening of the understanding of God's providence. If we cannot talk about what natural events are for in science, how do we visualize God as actively shaping those events to His ends? It is technically compatible with such a scientific account that the eyes of faith can discern a providential pattern, but if people look to science for objective knowledge of the world, and science finds final causes to be redundant, some may conclude that God's providential care of the world is an illusion. This already seems a very different vision of science than Kepler's. As we saw in the previous chapter, Kepler did not make a rigid distinction between science and natural theology, seeing the laws of nature as God's "providential plans." Although the causal connection between particular pairs of events need not disclose any divine purpose, Kepler thought that the existence of general laws governing the cosmos in reliable ways was a clear sign of that purpose.

A second problem is that the anti-anthropomorphic arguments against final causes go too far. Christians understand that we are made like God (in His image), and that although His thoughts and ways are above our own (Is. 55:8–9), we can learn about God by what He is like. Our clearest source is the revelation of God in the man Jesus Christ. To the charge that all talk of God's purposes is anthropomorphic, we may reply that God made us *theomorphic* (in His likeness), and also that in Christ, God Himself is anthropomorphic (He made Himself like one of us), thus creating a built-in affinity between human beings and God. Informed by this faith, and mindful of the limitations of finitude and sin, we should affirm that we can know something of what God has done in nature, and may indeed see signs of His providential hand. Although we may sometimes read into natural events motives that are not there, that does not make us incapable of ever discerning God's work in the world.

¹⁴³ See Edward B. Davis, "Science as Christian Vocation: The Case of Robert Boyle," in *Reading God's World*, ed. Angus Menuge, 206–207.

It is a great irony of history that philosophers and scientists who were for the most part practicing Christians set in motion a train of thought whose unintended consequence was a diminution of the sense of God's providential care of the world and of our special status as beings made in the image of God. By fixating on the gift and not its Giver, even devout Christians have repeatedly found ways to increase their distance from God.¹⁴⁴

3. The rise of autonomous reason

Another example of the same trend is the exaltation of human reason as a faculty capable of discerning objective truth independent of divine revelation.¹⁴⁵ Two of the most audacious philosophical works of the early modern period are Francis Bacon's *The New Organon*, and René Descartes' *Meditations*. In both works, there is a rejection of tradition and external authorities as a basis for knowledge in favor of the use of our unaided faculties, such as reason and experience.

In *The New Organon*, Francis Bacon (1561–1626) is merciless (and often unfair) in his critique of the Aristotelian paradigm for science that had dominated the scholastic period. He says that "the sciences we now have are no more than elegant arrangements of things previously discovered, not methods of discovery or pointers to new results."¹⁴⁶ In other words, scholastic science was stagnant and unfruitful because it deferred to the authority of the past instead of devising better methods for discovering new knowledge. He charges that the scholastics were guilty of attempting to "anticipate" nature on the basis of preconceived metaphysics and erroneous methods of scientific reasoning, when they should have been content merely to "interpret" nature through a patient accumulation of data.¹⁴⁷ Bacon is audacious enough to claim that what we need is to construct a whole new method of scientific inquiry. Just as whole new worlds were found by use of the lodestone, Bacon thought that a reformed inductive method would accelerate the pace of scientific discovery. His approach had two major components. First, the investigator must purge his mind of preconceived bias—the idols of the mind¹⁴⁸—so that he does not try to anticipate what nature must do, but is open to discovering the truth about natural phenomena. Then he must collect large and varied

¹⁴⁴ Consider also St. Paul's warning in Romans 1:18–25 about the perennial human tendency to focus on the gift and not the Giver, to worship created things rather than the Creator.

¹⁴⁵ On the wages of Enlightenment rationalism, see also the CTCR report, *The Natural Knowledge of God: In Christian Confession and Christian Witness* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2013), 21–24.

¹⁴⁶ Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, ed. Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 34 (Book I, aphorism VIII).

¹⁴⁷ Bacon, *The New Organon*, 38–39 (Book I, aphorisms XXVI–XXX).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 40–56 (Book I, aphorisms XXXIX–LXVII).

samples of facts, so that his conclusion is an interpretation of the phenomena driven by those facts and tested against them.¹⁴⁹

On one hand, there is something admirable about Bacon's insistence that we should interpret nature rather than anticipate its course. This fits well with the ideas that nature is a book which God freely inscribed with His messages, and that we are called to read and interpret them. On the other hand, by disconnecting this rational method from the revealed truth about ourselves, Bacon is surely tempted to exaggerate our ability to purge our minds of bias. We cannot remove the original sin that infects all of our faculties, and which constantly biases our reason to accept falsehoods that it wants to believe in and attempt to rewrite reality after our own preferences.

Like Bacon, René Descartes (1596–1650) was unashamed in his disdain for his intellectual predecessors.

Medieval philosophers had seen themselves as principally engaged in transmitting a corpus of knowledge ... Renaissance philosophers had seen themselves as rediscovering and republicizing the lost wisdom of ancient times. It was Descartes who was the first philosopher since Antiquity to offer himself as a total innovator; as the person who had the privilege of setting out the truth about man and his universe for the very first time. Where Descartes trod, others followed: Locke, Hume, and Kant each offered their philosophies as new creations, constructed for the first time on sound scientific principles.¹⁵⁰

Descartes boldly proposed that, independent of past authorities, our own reason can provide an antidote to our vulnerability to error. In the *Meditations*, Descartes observes that our senses and dreams can deceive us into thinking there are realities which are not there.¹⁵¹ But even if there were a supremely powerful demon that deceives us as much as possible, still we must exist as thinking things in order to be deceived. Descartes goes on to argue for the existence of a perfect God who would not allow people to be systematically deceived about the natural world. This does not mean that we cannot make mistakes: errors occur, Descartes explains, because we do not restrain our will to affirm or deny only those things which we understand.¹⁵² However, a perfect God would not so make us that we are mistaken in our involuntary,

¹⁴⁹ This is the main topic of the second book of *The New Organon*. Bacon shows how his method of "true induction" applies to scientific investigation of the nature of heat by gathering various tables of data in which heat is present, absent, or present in varying degrees.

¹⁵⁰ Anthony Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy, Volume 3: Modern Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 40.

¹⁵¹ René Descartes, "The Meditations," in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Volume II, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

¹⁵² René Descartes, "The Meditations," Meditation IV.

innate beliefs about the nature of reality—such as our belief in the external physical world and in other minds.

On the one hand, Descartes' reasoning did make room for God, whom Descartes viewed as the creator and continuing sustainer of the world.¹⁵³ Yet, on the other hand, his method assumes that reason can disclose the structure of reality without the illumination of revelation or the regeneration of faith. In the *Meditations*, Descartes' main contribution to the foundations of science was the idea that the essence of matter was extension in space. This led him to think that the idea of a vacuum (empty space) was self-contradictory and that all motion was by direct contact (mechanical causes) in a plenum packed with matter. Unaided reason led Descartes to conclusions scientists now regard as false (e.g., they acknowledge that vacuums exist and that neither gravitation nor electromagnetism require a mechanical medium). Descartes' limited reason was unable to disclose many marvelous things about the natural world undreamed of in his philosophy.

But much more disturbing than the specific errors of specific modern thinkers is the general tendency to suppose that reason can "go it alone." 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. What this neglects is that all reasoning requires assumptions, and that its conclusions are only as good as those assumptions permit. If our foundation is what seems indubitable to fallen, finite reason, we are ignoring the clear light from above that discloses reality from a vantage point unconditioned by finitude and sin. It is only by starting with God's revelation about the nature of creation, including ourselves and the nature of our sin, that we can hope to discern reality as it is.

As Jastram argues, we can learn an important lesson about the proper role of human reason in science by reflecting on the Greek myth of Daedalus and Icarus.¹⁵⁴ Daedalus builds artificial wings of feathers, wax and string, and urges his son Icarus to fly with him, cautioning him to find a path midway between heaven and earth.¹⁵⁵ But Icarus ignores the warning and flies too close to the sun: the wax melts, the wings disintegrate, and Icarus plunges to his death. The point of the story is not that humans should scorn their reason and turn away from science. If this were right, then humans would never have learned to build aircraft and space shuttles. Rather, Daedalus' advice to Icarus was to find a *middle way* for reason, one that allows investigation of

¹⁵³ See the masterful analysis of Daniel Garber, *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹⁵⁴ Nathan Jastram, "Scientists Called to Be Like God," in Menzies, ed., *Reading God's World*, 243–269, 264–266.

¹⁵⁵ See the portion of Ovid's retelling of the Greek myth in his *Metamorphoses*, quoted in Nathan Jastram, "Scientists Called to Be Like God," 265.

new possibilities but does not, like the people of Babel (Gen. 11), attempt to achieve godlike knowledge that is beyond our creaturely limitations. In other words, our reason is sufficiently *above* nature that we can hope to understand it well enough to be its stewards, but it is sufficiently *below* God that it cannot achieve the absolute certainty of an omniscient God. As the great Jesuit historian and theologian of science Stanley Jaki argued, this middle road gives just the right balance of confidence and humility to support sound scientific investigation.¹⁵⁶ It is neither so timid that science seems beyond our ability, nor so proud that it promotes *hubris*, claiming that science provides the ultimate answers that are God's alone.

4. The Newtonian world machine

Descartes hoped that his mechanical natural world still left God in charge as the primary cause of motion.¹⁵⁷ Likewise, Isaac Newton (1643–1727) believed that his physics captured the motions of the planets but did not explain their wise arrangement in a stable solar system. He said in the *General Scholium*: "This most elegant system of the sun, planets, and comets could not have arisen without the design and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being."¹⁵⁸ As we will see, a great irony of history is that Newton, who was devoutly religious, developed his physics in such a way as to refute materialism and *make room* for God, yet what was later called "the Newtonian world machine" appeared to be a closed, autonomous, materialistic system in which even God could not intervene.¹⁵⁹

Like Robert Boyle, Newton believed in both mechanical causes (which require the contact of particles) and active principles which could operate without any such medium.¹⁶⁰ Newton rejected the Cartesian paradigm according to which all causation is by contact because it supported the materialism of Thomas Hobbes and seemed to lead inevitably to atheism. He boldly proposed that the force of gravitation was an active power which could act across empty space with no mechanical medium. He was careful to say that gravity in no way excluded God's governance of the universe: on the contrary, gravity was itself a means by which God controlled the phenomena.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Stanley Jaki, *The Road of Science and the Ways to God*, cited in Jastram, "Scientists Called to Be Like God," 267.

¹⁵⁷ This case is well made by Daniel Garber in chapter 9 of his *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics*. While some of Descartes' ideas may have encouraged deism, Garber shows that Descartes himself was far from deism, believing that it was only because of God's continuing, sustaining influence that the cosmos remained in existence moment by moment.

¹⁵⁸ "General Scholium," in eds. Timothy McGrew, Marc Alpector-Kelly and Fritz Allhoff, *Philosophy of Science: An Historical Anthology* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 177.

¹⁵⁹ See Pearcey and Thaxton, *The Soul of Science*, chapter 4.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 89–90.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

When he said *hypotheses non fingo* (I feign no hypotheses), he intended that gravity was simply a postulate that could be used to account for the relative motions of bodies and was not an ultimate explanation for the motions observed. In other words, gravity was proposed as a means by which God controlled those motions. Indeed, Newton also expressed an early version of the fine-tuning argument, because he realized that the masses and velocities of the heavenly bodies in the solar system were finely tuned to support a stable system.¹⁶² While his universal laws of motion explained many things, they did not explain the specific value of the gravitational constant, and he was aware that a significant increase or decrease in that constant would cause the solar system either to collapse or to fly apart.

As the Enlightenment progressed, the ideas of active principles and the providential control of God were increasingly rejected. It did not help that Newton made the mistaken suggestion that God's periodic intervention would be necessary to maintain the stability of the solar system because of perturbations in planetary orbits. This view led him to be ridiculed by other scientists and philosophers, who thought that Almighty God would not design a cosmos that requires constant adjustments and tinkering.¹⁶³ Pierre-Simone Laplace (1749–1827) showed that these perturbations were in fact quite regular and did not lead to long-term instability or require intervention. This demonstration was later regarded as iconic of the ability of physical systems to maintain themselves, and to reject appeals to special divine providence as a "God of the gaps" fallacy, that argues erroneously from our ignorance of a natural cause to the conclusion that there must be a supernatural cause. At the same time, active principles were reinterpreted as fundamental powers of matter itself, so that matter did not need a special intermediary for God to govern it:

Matter came to be regarded as self-sufficient, and Newton's active powers were absorbed in the materialistic philosophy he had hoped to refute. The irony is that this materialistic, mechanistic philosophy then came to be called the "Newtonian" worldview.¹⁶⁴

This brash attempt to reduce the natural world to matter in motion came at a huge cost. Since the only properties of matter which could be studied by natural science were impersonal ones—like the extension, location, figure and motion of particles, the so-called "primary qualities"—the entire inner mental life of people was excluded from scientific reality. The colors, sounds, tastes, smells, and textures a person experiences were relegated to the subjective realm of "secondary qualities" that arise when our senses interact with

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

the primary qualities of matter, but matter itself does not have the secondary qualities. In other words, most of what human beings call "life"—the way we experience things—is not the way things really are. Instead, we live in a virtual reality of subjectivity that creates a barrier between us and the natural world conceived as a world-machine devoid of subjectivity.¹⁶⁵

At the same time, a self-sufficient world does not seem to need God's presence and on-going guidance. In the 18th century, the French Encyclopedists—like Jean-Baptiste d'Alembert (1717–1783), Denis Diderot (1713–1784), and Baron Paul-Henri d'Holbach (1723–1789)—used the Newtonian worldview to attack the "superstitions" of the past. By this they meant revealed religion, arguing that autonomous reason had triumphed in disclosing an autonomous nature. Some of the thinkers of this time, like François-Marie Voltaire (1694–1778), embraced deism, believing that God could be known from reason and nature alone. Voltaire held that God had created the world as a vast clockwork system that ran on by itself and did not require, or allow, further intervention. Others, like d'Holbach, embraced full-fledged materialism and atheism. As a result, reason was used to dismiss miracles as impossible, pre-scientific ideas, and religious texts that included miraculous accounts were subjected to historical criticism and assumed to contain legendary material.

Despite their low view of revelation, at least those Enlightenment thinkers who were deists thought they had some good arguments for God's existence. They thought that a mechanical world that does not need God's constant intervention gave greater testimony to His wise craftsmanship. Many people followed Descartes in holding that human beings clearly transcend the physical world because they had souls. The subjectivity that physical science could not find in the material world showed that we are something more than a material being. So it seemed for a while that we had good evidence in ourselves that there was something more than the Newtonian world machine. This could allow us to reconcile ideas like free will and our moral responsibility to God's laws with an otherwise impersonal universe that was deterministic and amoral.

5. The rise of Naturalism

Deism, however, proved to be an unstable halfway house as naturalistic thinking expanded its domain.¹⁶⁶ In his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, David Hume (1711–1776) cast doubt on any attempt to argue from the character of the natural world to the nature of deity. For example, if we argue

¹⁶⁵ For a well-known critique of this view, see C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1947).

¹⁶⁶ On the rise of Enlightenment naturalism, see also the CTCR report, *The Natural Knowledge of God: In Christian Confession and Christian Witness*, 21–24.

from the good in the world to the existence of a good God, why can we not argue from the evil in the world to the existence of an evil God?¹⁶⁷ Following the earlier lead of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709–1751), a physician, asked why the same mechanistic approach applied to the natural world around us could not be applied to human beings. His studies led him to the view that man himself is a machine—a machine in a world of machines.¹⁶⁸ And Baron d'Holbach (1723–1789) concluded that if we are subject to the same kind of causation we see in the physical world, we must not have free will.¹⁶⁹

This corrosive skepticism did not immediately lead most thinkers to embrace a naturalistic worldview. This is largely because, despite the ideological crusade of the Encyclopedists—who are in many ways the intellectual forebears of today's New Atheists (Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris and the late Christopher Hitchens)¹⁷⁰—there were many defenders of natural theology and, in particular, biological design, well into the nineteenth century. After the classic work *Natural Theology* (1802) of William Paley (1743–1805), there were many other great works of natural theology, such as the contributions of William Whewell (1794–1866) and Charles Babbage (1791–1871) to the *Bridgewater Treatises*. These are the works of men of scientific and philosophical genius who were not intimidated by David Hume or the French Encyclopedists. In fact, in his treatment of the argument from design in *The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Hume himself had admitted that alternatives to divine design, such as the self-organization of matter due to unknown powers, were far less plausible. Hume even anticipates the modern design argument by apparently conceding that a library of self-reproducing books (uncannily similar to a contemporary understanding of DNA) would surely point to a designing intelligence.

Naturalism, therefore, could not hope to gain a strong foothold until the argument from design was unseated. Two major factors came to the aid of a naturalistic worldview. The first was the scientific theory of natural selection proposed in Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859). After studying the selective breeding of livestock, the range of species found in the Galapagos, and a variety of fossils and geology, Darwin concluded that the apparent design of living creatures was really the result of natural causes. In any given population of creatures, there would always be variation (whose source Darwin did not know) and some creatures would happen to be equipped with

¹⁶⁷ David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and Other Writings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁶⁸ Julien Offray de la Mettrie, *Machine Man and Other Writings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁶⁹ See Baron Paul Henri d'Holbach, *The System of Nature* (Manchester, UK: Clinamen Press, 1999), chapter XI.

¹⁷⁰ Vox Day makes this connection very clear in his *The Irrational Atheist* (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2008).

features that gave them an adaptive advantage, increasing their chances of survival and reproduction. If the source of these features was heritable, then over time and assuming no great change in the environment, creatures with those features would tend to predominate in the population. So chance variation and natural selection could produce creatures that looked as if they had been especially designed to be well-adapted to their environments.

Darwin did not merely propose a “new” scientific theory (in fact, the idea was not that new, being anticipated by the work of Denis Diderot and Darwin's grandfather Erasmus). More important, Darwin proposed a whole new *method* for science which removed the need to talk of design, something which Boyle and Newton had made room for, at least in the background. While Kepler, Boyle and Newton had recognized three modes of causation—chance, necessity and design—the Darwinian methodology recognized only two. Many later scientists and philosophers took this as a mandate for methodological naturalism. According to methodological naturalism, while scientists can believe in intelligent causes, a truly scientific explanation can only appeal to the undirected, unintelligent causes of chance, necessity, and their combination. If this is so, then a complete scientific account of reality can be given without ever appealing to the intelligent causation of a designing God.

As Michael Ruse points out, however, Darwin's theory was not at first widely accepted and he failed to found “a professionally based area of biological science.”¹⁷¹ This was mainly because Darwin had no mechanism to explain the variation of creatures, and because many scientists maintained that there were fixed boundaries between species. While natural selection might explain variation within a species, it could not account for transitions between two species. The proposed mechanism came only later in the “Darwinian synthesis” with Mendelian genetics in the 1930's. With the subsequent discovery of DNA, and the suggestion that the main source of variation was mutation and other undirected changes to the instructions in DNA, the modern neo-Darwinian paradigm emerged.

But this entrenchment of a naturalistic theory of the variation of life was not the only factor that led to the ascendancy of naturalism. The other was a parallel, philosophical development that encouraged an increasing number of thinkers to believe in scientism, the view that the naturalistic style of science as currently practiced was the only reliable source of knowledge about the world. The beginnings of this scientism can be seen in the work of the encyclopedists, who dismissed tradition and revelation in favor of what unaided, scientific reason could discern. The view was given a further push by the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). In his magnum opus, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argued that our concepts are only valid of the world of experience (*phenomena*) and cannot tell us how the world really is in

¹⁷¹ *Darwinism and its Discontents* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 24.

itself (we cannot access the *noumena* or things in themselves). From this, Kant concluded that metaphysical speculation about God, souls, and the moral law could not claim to be *knowledge*, even though he argued that all of them are presupposed by practical reason when we think about morality. After Kant, it seemed to many that science provides knowledge of the empirical world, but we cannot have *knowledge* in matters of religion or ethics, the beginnings of the “fact/value” divide.

Scientism was given further support by the work of Auguste Comte (1798–1857), who proposed the philosophy of positivism, according to which theology and metaphysics were outmoded, and empirical science was the only rational means of governing human society. Similar views were held by the Vienna Circle, a group of scientists and philosophers who met at the University of Vienna in the 1920s and early 1930s, including Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970), Victor Kraft (1880–1975), and Moritz Schlick (1882–1936). These thinkers advocated an austere empiricist epistemology that came to be known as logical positivism, according to which traditional metaphysics, religion and morality were non-cognitive (they could not be known or reasonably believed), because their statements were not amenable to empirical scientific investigation.

Logical positivism was popularized by Alfred J. Ayer (1910–1989) in his highly influential work, *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936). According to Ayer's “verification principle,” a statement is literally meaningful only if it is either true by definition (like “2 + 2 = 4” or “A bachelor is an unmarried man”) or verifiable in principle by some empirical observation or test. The consequence was that the statements of metaphysics, religion and ethics, being neither true by definition nor empirically testable, were declared to be literally meaningless. This did not imply that the statements of these disciplines had no meaning at all. For example, Ayer suggested that since the statements of ethics are typically expressed with a great deal of passion, perhaps they are merely disguised, indirect reports of our emotion. According to this view, known as emotivism, “Murder is wrong” is an expression of a strong feeling of disapproval for murder, while “Kindness is right” expresses a strong feeling of approval for kindness.

If naturalistic science is content to say that it reveals what can be known about reality under the limitation of naturalistic assumptions, then, of course, it is consistent with the existence and operation of supernatural forces which exceed its ability to explain. But if naturalistic science is combined with scientism, then the conclusion may be drawn that if science cannot detect the supernatural, then the supernatural does not exist. By similar arguments, not only miracles but souls, objective moral values, and God Himself are declared to be unknowable.

In the academic philosophical world, logical positivism has been roundly rejected because it is self-refuting and is inadequate even to make sense of science. Logical positivism is self-refuting because, as a philosophical theory,

it cannot claim to be true by definition and because it is not verifiable by observation. Therefore, by its own lights, logical positivism is literally meaningless and at best an expression of emotion. And despite its pretensions to exalt science as the only way of knowing, logical positivism is actually incompatible with scientific practice, since scientists frequently postulate unobservable particles and forces to explain what they can observe, and also rely on unobservable entities like numbers and logical relations to formulate their theories.

But the cultural residue of scientism is still with us in the widespread assumption that there is no such thing as metaphysical, religious or moral *knowledge*. At the practical level of everyday life, this is the legacy of naturalism, which makes people unable to see how what is believed in faith could be known to be true. It is one reason apologists find it so hard to convince contemporary people that there is hard evidence for the resurrection as a historical *fact*. For many, the resurrection has already been placed in a non-cognitive realm, since the assumption is that there could not be evidence for a supernatural event. Science is by definition naturalistic and if something cannot be known scientifically, it cannot be known at all. As a result, the resurrection and other miraculous claims of Christianity are relegated to a subjective realm accessible only by faith.

6. Science as a profession

Parallel with the rise of the idea that nature is an autonomous machine governed by purely undirected causes, there was a move away from the idea that science is a vocation, a way to be a priest in the book of nature, to the modern idea that science is a profession governed by standards independent of revelation. It is a revealing fact that this move was in part engineered by scientific materialists, like Thomas Huxley (1825–1895), who sought to position modern science as a rival and successor to the Christian church as a locus of cultural authority. While students of nature were called “natural philosophers” and “natural theologians” from the time of the scientific revolution until the nineteenth century, the coining of the new term “scientist” by William Whewell (1794–1866) in 1834,¹⁷² signaled the appearance of a new and independent profession. Clergy who had played a large role in previous scientific work were supplanted by a newer, more secularized breed of investigators more targeted on serving the needs of the modern, industrialized state.

[W]hereas previously in many of the scientific disciplines—and in natural history in particular—clergymen had played a predominant role, this was to change dramatically over the course

¹⁷² Peter Harrison, “Priests of the Most High God, with Respect to the Book of Nature”: The Vocational Identity of the Early Modern Naturalist,” in Menzies, ed., *Reading God's World*, 61.

of the [nineteenth] century.... The deliberate attempt on the part of some of the newly designated “scientists” to replace the clergy at the pinnacle of the professions was accompanied by a rhetoric that suggested the sciences were a kind of surrogate religion. “Darwin’s bulldog,” Thomas Huxley (1825–1895), thus wrote that he and his scientific brethren were members of a “church scientific.”¹⁷³

While only a minority of today’s scientists share such hostility toward religion, this fact about how science achieved its high status as a modern profession by distancing itself from the church goes some way to explain why today’s scientists do not see a clear connection between the official standards and those governing their faith. The deep connection between theology and science, which had been expressed and developed by so many previous scientists, was no longer seen as appropriate to a discipline that could claim its own authority independent of divine revelation.

7. The roots of moralistic therapeutic deism

In a recent landmark work, Christian Smith and Melinda Denton reported the findings of a major survey of the religiosity of American teens, “the largest, most comprehensive and detailed study of American teenage religion and spirituality conducted to date.”¹⁷⁴ What they found confirms that the divorce of science from theology and an unquestioned assumption of scientism has sadly disfigured the faith of many young people today. Regardless of whether they belong to religious communities that are officially Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, the survey showed that the default belief system of a majority of American youth is *moralistic therapeutic deism*. The wages of naturalism have exiled God from ongoing, providential care of His world (*deism*). God is “not particularly involved in one’s affairs—especially affairs in which one would prefer not to have God involved.”¹⁷⁵ Strict deism is revised however, because people still want the comfort of religion (the *therapeutic*): “Deism ... is revised ... by the therapeutic qualifier, making the distant God selectively available for taking care of needs... like a combination Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist.”¹⁷⁶ What lies behind the therapeutic dimension of this emasculated faith is the assumption that God is not really knowable (since He is unscientific), but He is there to make us feel better subjectively.

This is not a religion of repentance from sin ... of building character through suffering ... of basking in God’s love and grace.... It is about attaining subjective well-being, being able to resolve

¹⁷³ Harrison, “Priests of the Most High God,” 79

¹⁷⁴ *Soul Searching*, 7.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 165.

problems, and getting along amiably with other people.... [One person surveyed said:] “When I became a Christian ... it always made me feel better.”¹⁷⁷

Likewise the *moralistic* dimension is subordinated to the therapeutic modifier. The idea that there is an objective moral law of God is dismissed as unknowable, reflecting the presupposition of scientism. Instead, what moralism means here is: “being the kind of person that other people will like, fulfilling one’s personal potential, and not being socially disruptive [One teen said:] ‘It’s just whatever makes you feel good about you.’”¹⁷⁸

What this shows is that the wages of naturalism have not merely made it easier for people like Richard Dawkins to be intellectually fulfilled atheists. They have also led many religious people to radically revise their understanding of the Christian faith. The faith no longer consists of revealed truth claims about who God is, how He wants us to live, and what He has done to save us from our inability to live up to his expectations. Instead, faith is interpreted as little more than choosing to have a relentlessly positive attitude about life in the terms of a cosmic Bobby McFerrin’s, “Don’t worry, be happy,” or a Pharrell Williams’s “happiness is the truth.” Such “happiness” is grounded not in Christ’s forgiveness, but in the belief that we have no original sin and need no Savior.

We can expect that even many Christians who are scientists will be influenced by moralistic therapeutic deism. And so, instead of seeing science as a God-pleasing vocation—a way to serve God by using His intellectual gifts to study His other book—science is viewed as an autonomous profession, while religion provides a sense of comfort for those questions of meaning and value that science cannot address. This is the two-story mind described by Nancy Pearcey.¹⁷⁹ The lower story of objective fact is governed by naturalistic science. In the upper story of values, religion and morality live on, but only as subjective, private phenomena.

The great idea of vocation, that shows how scientific work has objective meaning and worth and which connects God’s plans and providential care of the world with human work, is absent. This is why it is so vital to help Christians who are scientists recover that understanding of providence working in and through both the natural world and the vocation of the scientist. In this way, Christian scientists will rightly see themselves as unified wholes as they go about their work, and not radically divided beings consisting of two disconnected halves.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 163–164.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁷⁹ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity From Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

8. Conclusion

This chapter has sketched the major historical sources of the problematic conception of the relationship between faith and science in the contemporary world. The revolt against final causes led to an increasingly mechanistic picture of the world, and this made it harder to visualize how God maintained His providential care of all creatures. Reason transitioned from humble servant of the faith to an autonomous magistrate able to judge the contents of objective reality. The world itself came to seem like an autonomous machine, making deism seem the best option for believers in God. Skepticism about natural theology and the soul led some to embrace outright materialism. For about a century brilliant defenses of natural theology kept materialism at bay, but then Darwin undermined the argument from design and the logical positivists positioned naturalistic science as the only way to know reality. Science no longer seemed like a vocation but appeared to be an independent profession with its own authority.

The fall-out of these historical developments is that contemporary people have a hard time seeing any deep connection between faith and science, as Christianity is no longer viewed as a source of objective truth. Faith is viewed by definition as non-cognitive, an attitude of mind that does not embrace any definite knowledge. This is one of the main sources of the moralistic therapeutic deism prevalent in our youth. Today, Christian theologians and philosophers are swimming upstream when they argue that science is an objectively meaningful vocation, and that the Christian faith makes claims that we can know to be true.

Chapter III Philosophical Issues

1. Introduction

Philosophy can help thoughtful Christians to identify the worldview assumptions that influence their perception of whether science can be pursued as a legitimate calling from God. In this chapter, we will begin with some of the ideas that have proven problematic for Christian scientists, since they either exclude or compromise important claims of faith. The goal here is to show that these ideas derive from extra-scientific ideologies that the Christian can and should reject. Then we will seek to show that, in fact, Christian theology provides many assumptions that are highly congenial to good science, and argue that there is no reason to divorce faith from the work of a Christian scientist.

2. Philosophical problems for the scientific vocation

As we saw in the last chapter, a consequence of the Enlightenment was that human reason was increasingly seen as an autonomous judge of all things. Behind this perception, two negative assumptions were at work. The first assumption was a denial of the full reality of sin: either original sin was rejected altogether or it was assumed that reason was not seriously infected. In both views, the idea of “total depravity,” that all of our faculties have been distorted and misdirected as a result of sin, is not taken seriously. The second assumption was a denial of the status of Scripture as the inspired, infallible, inerrant word of God.¹⁸⁰

The second assumption was manifested in several critical responses to Scripture, some more skeptical than others, but all of them united in denying that Scripture is the supreme authority over human judgments. The most skeptical claimed that Scripture was no more than a human attempt to understand the divine—a denial of inspiration, that reduces Scripture to an ordinary human work like Homer’s *Odyssey*. Others, slightly less skeptical, claimed that while Scripture is indeed a response to the divine, and so perhaps inspired, the resulting text thoroughly reflects the intellectual and moral limitations of its authors. In this view, the Holy Spirit is unable to or chooses not to overcome. In this view, divine inspiration interacts with human fallibility to produce a mixture of God’s truth and human error, and reason must be

¹⁸⁰ For a more detailed account of the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture, see chapter 4.

used to differentiate the good and bad parts of Scripture. A popular version of this view is that Scripture is reliable in its theological and “spiritual” claims (especially in its claims about how human beings may be saved), but not in its “secular” claims concerning matters of historical or scientific fact.¹⁸¹

The combination of these two assumptions leads to the idea that reason is the best instrument for distinguishing truth and error in Scripture. And in science, it led to the view that a scriptural faith provides no guidance for the scientist. Reason thus becomes the only judge both of God’s Word and of God’s world.

Further, these assumptions lead to two troubling consequences for the Christian scientist. First, it can easily seem that science is liable to prove Scripture wrong, which may either dissuade a Christian from going into science for fear of what they may find, or lead them to compromise the faith because they think that science has shown at least some of its claims to be simply untenable. Secondly, Christian scientists may find it impossible to see how their faith could possibly provide insight about how their professional work should be done.

To be sure, Scripture does not claim to supply the techniques (or means) of science (such as how to devise experiments or to test theories), but it does not follow that it has nothing important to say about the nature and purpose of science. To allow autonomous reason to make these latter determinations may encourage Christian scientists to pursue their work in ways that make coherent sense and yet are not God-pleasing because they violate His moral boundaries for their vocation.

Over time, autonomous reason also encouraged the development of a number of ideologies which are either hostile toward, or in significant tension with, the Christian faith. Both historically and psychologically, the rise of the idea that reason can manage to discover truth by itself is closely tied to the idea that the physical world can manage by itself, in the sense that the world is a closed system of law-governed matter. As we saw in the last chapter, this materialistic view became increasingly prevalent during the Enlightenment, and many claimed that human beings are no more than physical machines passively obedient to physical laws.

Contemporary Christian scientists, who wish to pursue their vocation faithfully in light of Christian truth, are strongly advised to study materialism. They should learn how to recognize its implications and critique its assumptions, as this ideology has had an enormous impact on the main-

¹⁸¹ This is the typical view of neo-orthodox theology, which seeks to protect the Gospel from historical investigation by insisting that it belongs to a special realm of supra-history accessible only by faith. In this view, it does not matter if the Scripture contains erroneous historical claims as they have no impact on the Gospel. This view seems flatly inconsistent with Paul’s insistence that if Christ was not raised, our faith is futile (1 Cor. 15:17). We will show the inadequacy of this view as a model for biblical exegesis in the next chapter.

stream, institutionalized conception of what science is and does. While materialism is the central dogma, radiating out from it are a variety of subsidiary views which reflect its influence in one way or another. So we will first discuss materialism and then consider these further ramifications. Our goal is to clarify what the basic claims are, why they are in tension with the Christian faith, and how they can be resisted by a thoughtful Christian scientist.

a. Materialism

A worldview is an ostensibly coherent account of the world which includes foundational assumptions of metaphysics (what is real?), epistemology (how do we know?) and ethics (how should we live?). As developed in the modern period, materialism is a worldview which makes two main metaphysical claims.¹⁸² First, it says that the bedrock of reality is purely physical: at the foundation of all things, we find only the sort of objects and forces disclosed by physical science, such as elementary particles and electromagnetism. Second, it says that anything else that exists is dependent on this physical bedrock. Perhaps minds and moral values exist, but if they do they reduce to, or at least wholly depend on (“supervene” on, “emerge” from), the physical—and so have no independent reality.

In contemporary philosophy, there are three main kinds of materialists, distinguished by how they treat phenomena that appear to transcend materialistic categories, such as consciousness, free will, the soul, and moral values. Eliminative materialists simply assert that such phenomena do not really exist: they are an illusion that will not be recognized in our “final theory” of reality.¹⁸³ Reductive materialists claim that the apparently transcendent phenomena are actually identical to physical objects or states like brains or brain states.¹⁸⁴ Non-reductive materialists admit that these phenomena are something more than the physical bedrock, but say that the phenomena nonetheless supervene on or emerge from that bedrock.¹⁸⁵

In any of these views, the physical defines the boundaries of what exists: there cannot be any entities which are independent of the physical. Thus (unless they radically redefine the concepts in ways that obviously differ from

¹⁸² For a recent, systematic exposition and critique of materialism, see George Bealer and Robert Koons, eds., *The Waning of Materialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). For a more accessible (but profound) critique of the central planks of materialism, see Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*.

¹⁸³ See for example, Paul and Patricia Churchland, *On the Contrary: Critical Essays 1987–1997* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Bradford Books, 1999). For a more accessible account, see Patricia Churchland, *Touching a Nerve: The Self as Brain* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2013).

¹⁸⁴ A prominent example is philosopher Jaegwon Kim. See, for example, his *Mind in a Physical World: An Essay on the Mind-Body Problem and Mental Causation* (Cambridge, MA: Bradford Books, 2000).

¹⁸⁵ Probably the most famous proponent of this view is philosopher John Searle. See, for example, his *Freedom and Neurobiology: Reflections on Free Will, Language, and Political Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

traditional theistic beliefs¹⁸⁶), materialists typically deny the existence of God and the human soul, and they also often deny objective moral values.

In the Christian view, God is a pure spiritual (immaterial) being who is not composed of, or dependent on, physical particles or forces: God existed as a wholly non-physical being before the physical universe even existed. Likewise the soul is traditionally understood as an immaterial element which, while designed to be integrated with a human body in a single whole person, transcends the body, so that at physical death and before the resurrection, the soul can exist without that body.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, the objective moral values recognized by Christian theism are not derived solely from nature but ultimately from the will of a transcendent, supernatural being.

A clear recognition of the direct incompatibility between Christian theism and materialism is essential here because the influence of materialistic ideas on contemporary science will often be unconscious. Most fundamentally, it is easy to assume that science as currently practiced is able to disclose the full truth about reality and not to notice that much of science aims only to detect materialistic entities. Thus if such science by its very nature is not looking for (or able to detect) God, the soul or objective moral values, all this should tell us is that science (at least so practiced) is a limited instrument, not that these transcendent entities do not exist. If science is not even looking for X (or is unable to detect X if it is looking for it), the failure of science to find X tells us literally nothing about the existence of X.

More specifically, consider each of the three kinds of being denied by materialism: God, the soul, and objective moral values. All scientific observations and measurements depend on physical organs (such as eyes and ears) and instruments (microscopes, telescopes, spectrophotometers, seismographs, etc.). These organs and instruments are (at least normally) directly sensitive only to physical entities and processes. So if one focuses on the immediate causes of an observation or a measurement, these will typically be physical variables. But nothing follows from this about the existence or

¹⁸⁶ Thus a process theologian or a pantheist may speak of “God,” but this is a reference to some immanent feature of nature (or to nature as a whole), and not to a being that transcends nature as in Christian theism. Likewise, some “Christian physicalists” may speak of the soul, but for them the soul is simply the form or organization of physical matter, which is not what traditional Christian theists mean by the soul. Likewise, for consistent materialists, “moral values” typically refer to properties determined by the capacity to feel pleasure and pain (as in Peter Singer’s utilitarianism) or to the result of “reflective equilibrium” as we discuss our moral intuitions (as in Sharon Street’s moral anti-realism), but this is not at all the idea of a transcendent moral law binding human behavior.

¹⁸⁷ It is important to note that in the beginning God designed us as integrated wholes of mind, body and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23), and that the separation of the soul from the body and our need to be raised from the dead are consequences of human sin (Rom. 6:23). Thus the Christian affirmation that God can maintain our souls in existence at physical death is a reflection of God’s mercy despite our tragic disobedience. It is not, as in gnosticism, a picture of our ideal existence. The body is not, as the gnostics taught, a prison-house of the soul: God intends to reintegrate soul and body at the resurrection.

non-existence of a non-physical being like God. Indeed it may be that when we take a broader view of things, the best explanation of the human ability to discern the natural kinds of creatures that populate nature and the laws that govern their physical behavior is that God made these creatures and laws, and also made our minds in such a way that we are attuned to their discovery. It is important for the Christian scientist, therefore, to distinguish clearly between primary and secondary causes. Most of the time, scientists are engaged in exploring the immediate causes within nature (secondary causes) of an interesting phenomenon. They are not looking for the ultimate explanation of why such phenomena exist, why such phenomena are correlated with those immediate or secondary causes, or why such phenomena are even intelligible to the human mind (primary causes). With some justification scientists can often (if not always¹⁸⁸) say that questions of primary causation are the province of philosophy and theology. But the important point is this: to the extent that science looks only for secondary causes of phenomena, it is simply silent on the matter of primary causes, and so has nothing directly to say about the existence (or non-existence) of God.

This is important because a number of atheist scientists have tried to claim that science somehow *disproves* (or counts against) the existence of God.¹⁸⁹ For their argument to get started, these atheists would first need to show that the science in question was looking for God and capable of detecting His presence. Otherwise, a simple response is to say that it is not surprising that scientists who were not looking for God and/or were not able to detect Him found no evidence of His existence. If we investigate a windowless room, we can find no evidence for the existence of the Sun. This is true, but we also cannot discover any evidence against the existence of the Sun. This is because our mode of investigation was incapable of discovering the Sun even if it did exist. So it is worth asking such apologists for atheism exactly why they think their theories and observations have any bearing on the issue of God’s existence. Unless they can show that their investigations concern the existence of primary causes, they are simply irrelevant to the question of God’s existence.

Some similar points apply to the soul. Neurological observations and measurements can reveal the state of the brain, as our senses and instruments (such as various brain scanning techniques) are responsive to physical variables. But the fact that these observations and instruments are not capable of directly detecting the soul is not by itself a reason to think that the soul does not exist. To be sure, there may be broader facts about human cognition that

¹⁸⁸ It is arguable that some areas of science make a consideration of primary causes unavoidable, for example, when science theorizes about the origin of the universe, or the fact that it appears to be fine-tuned for both intelligent life and scientific discovery.

¹⁸⁹ See for example, Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*; Victor Stenger, *God: The Failed Hypothesis. How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2008); Lawrence Krauss, *A Universe From Nothing*.

are best explained by postulating a soul.¹⁹⁰ Most of the time, however, scientists are not attempting such a grand explanation, but are merely focusing on the local and proximal causes of observed events which, unsurprisingly, are typically physical.¹⁹¹ So again, the findings of such limited inquiries are typically irrelevant to the existence of the soul. When scientists (more usually, materialist philosophers) claim that science has somehow disproved the existence of the soul, we should ask whether their methods of investigation were capable of detecting the soul's presence or absence in the first place.

In the case of objective moral values, a great deal of confusion has been caused by a systematic ambiguity in the contemporary usage of "value."¹⁹² The ancients spoke of *virtues* as something knowable and objective that would promote human flourishing. Using "value" in this sense, we can talk of justice, goodness or rightness as being just as real as mountains and gravitation. But today, we tend to focus more on the *psychological* process of evaluation, a process which results in our valuing something. Thus for us a "value" is a subjective, personal possession: it characterizes not how valuable something is, but how much we value it.

As a result, when neuroscientists and evolutionary psychologists provide accounts of the origin of "morality," it is easy for them to confuse two quite different questions.¹⁹³ These theories typically try to explain the neuro-anatomical¹⁹⁴ features correlated with moral cognition (such as the prefrontal cortex, vital to our self-control) or to suggest an evolutionary origin for the moral sense.¹⁹⁵ But this only looks at values in the subjective, psychological sense: it concerns how and why we tend to *think* and *feel* some things are good

¹⁹⁰ For example, see Baker and Goetz, eds., *The Soul Hypothesis*; Moreland, *The Recalcitrant Imago Dei*; David Barnett, "You Are Simple," in Robert C. Koons and George Bealer, eds., *The Waning of Materialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 161–174; E. J. Lowe, *Personal Agency: The Metaphysics of Mind and Action* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Richard Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁹¹ For an excellent discussion of this point, see Goetz and Taliaferro, *Naturalism*, chapter 2.

¹⁹² A good study of the decline of virtue language is Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Demoralization of Society: From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values* (New York: Knopf, 1995).

¹⁹³ A good example of this confusion is Christopher Boehm's recent book, *The Evolution of Virtue, Altruism, and Shame* (New York: Basic Books, 2012). Boehm's evolutionary account of how humans allegedly came to value things is presented as an account of the evolution of morality, as if actions became good or evil when we came to think of them in a certain way. By contrast, in Scripture, the validity of God's moral law is never made dependent on anyone's recognition of that validity. Indeed whole nations can be wrong, following false gods and mistaken moral and religious beliefs, and God judges them because of their failure to acknowledge His moral law.

¹⁹⁴ Neuroanatomy is that specialized branch of anatomy that studies the various functional components of the human brain and nervous system.

¹⁹⁵ For example, see James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense* (New York: The Free Press, 1993); Larry Arnhart's *Darwinian Natural Right* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998); and Frans de Waal, *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

or bad, right or wrong, but it has nothing to do with what actually is good or bad, right or wrong.

If by morality we mean a moral law—a system of objectively binding obligations and duties—these accounts have *nothing* to do with morality. These theories at most may tell us something of the secondary causes that have shaped our moral faculties and that play a role in our moral cognition. This by itself tells us nothing about whether or not there is, beyond these secondary causes, an objective moral law according to which some of these thoughts and feelings are correct and some are not. As C. S. Lewis argues, such "an account may (or may not) explain why men do in fact make moral judgments. It does not explain how they could be right in making them."¹⁹⁶

It is only if the accounts claim to give a sufficient, materialistic account of the moral law itself that they could hope to show that the moral law is not transcendent. But this appears to be a serious case of overreach: materialistic science is equipped to tell us about what is and about what in fact happens, but it cannot tell us what should be or what ought to happen. To claim otherwise is to commit the naturalistic or "is/ought fallacy," where one moves illicitly from what in fact occurs in nature to a conclusion about what ought to occur. In particular, scientific facts about why and how we value certain things cannot tell us whether we should value them. The mere fact that we value something in the psychological sense does not show that it is valuable. For example, a person may psychologically value a poisoned apple as food, but it does not follow that the apple is valuable as nourishment.

So in all of these cases, thoughtful Christians in the sciences should guard against the ideological appropriation of science—the attempt to make science say more than it really can. To the extent that much of science restricts itself to secondary causes within nature, it is incapable of making pronouncements on transcendent matters like God, the soul, and objective moral values. The illusion that it can make such pronouncements often derives from an unconscious commitment to scientism, an ideology often associated with materialism.

b. Scientism

Scientism is a philosophical handmaiden of materialism. While materialism is a metaphysical claim (about what exists), scientism is an epistemological claim (about what we can know). In its strong form, scientism asserts that materialistic science is the only means of *knowing* what is real.¹⁹⁷ Materialists typically claim that science can *only* disclose material causes of material effects. Notice that this is much stronger than saying that most of the

¹⁹⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, 2d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 36.

¹⁹⁷ A weaker version of scientism admits that there may be other sources of evidence, but asserts that materialistic science is the most authoritative and hence best source for anything we can confidently call knowledge.

time this is what science does, which is uncontroversial. Still, even if science could never provide evidence for immaterial entities such as God, the soul, and objective moral values, we have just seen that this by itself has no bearing on whether or not these entities exist. Only if this (alleged) fact is combined with scientism in its strong form are we led to conclude that knowledge of such immaterial entities is impossible. If science is the only way to know what is real, and science can only discover the material, then immaterial entities are unknowable.

How should thoughtful Christians respond to such an argument? One response is an in-principle objection: full-strength scientism is internally incoherent, for two reasons. First, scientism is not science—materialistic or otherwise—but a philosophical claim *about* science. If that is so, and materialistic science exhausts what is knowable, then no one can know that scientism is true. Second, even within science, scientific theories require for their formulation the existence of abstract objects like numbers and mathematical relations. Abstract objects, however, are not material objects and (as many philosophers argue) they are not "the sorts of properties whose instances can stand in physical causal relations with the brain."¹⁹⁸ These theories are themselves collections of propositions held to be at least approximately true, and propositions (and arguably, truth itself) also seem to be abstract entities and hence not physical.

If this is right, and if scientism is true, then scientific theories are not themselves knowable because they involve non-materialistic metaphysical commitments. On the other hand, if we can know that a scientific theory is (at least approximately) true, then it must be that we can have knowledge of the non-material entities that are presupposed by stating that theory and by attempting to verify or falsify its claims, in which case scientism is false. But if scientism is rejected and non-physical objects are allowed as potential items of knowledge, then there is no reason to exclude the possibility of knowing God, the soul, and objective moral values.

Another response is an in-fact objection: in fact, it is highly implausible to claim that materialistic science is the only legitimate source of knowledge. Full-strength scientism appears to be an example of intellectual imperialism, in which one discipline attempts to claim a monopoly on knowledge by delegitimizing other sources. Yet it is hard for anyone well-versed in great poetry, plays, novels, etc., to believe that none of this literature provides knowledge about the human condition. Similarly, mathematicians and logicians seem to provide knowledge that is not dependent on material causes. For example, Kurt Gödel, Alan Turing, and many other mathematical logicians proved theorems which show that there are some things that no digital computer can

¹⁹⁸ Moreland, *The Recalcitrant Imago Dei*, 149.

do.¹⁹⁹ These results hold regardless of how the computer is physically implemented at the hardware level and are not obtained by interacting with actual physical computers—indeed, some of the results preceded the existence of any physical, general purpose digital computer. Thus this knowledge of the limitations of physical systems appears to transcend anything that could be known by interacting with material causes, including physical computers themselves. Also it seems that we know some things—that we are selves, that we can reason, that we have free will and moral responsibility—by introspection, by direct, first-person access to an immaterial mind or soul. We do not know such things by the impersonal observations of materialistic science, such as observations and manipulations of brains. It is hard to read the works of the great ancient and medieval philosophers (such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas) and deny that they contain any knowledge about the nature of moral virtues and their connection to human flourishing, despite the fact that moral virtues are not materialistic entities.

A third response is a practical objection: if something is true, coherent and important, we would expect it to be possible to live by it. Yet no one can live as if scientism is true. In our ordinary dealings with others, we must generally assume that they are enduring, rational persons with free will and moral responsibility, and we think of ourselves in the same way. If we do not think of people in this way, we can no longer make rational sense of their behavior. Yet enduring, rational, free, moral beings do not seem to be merely material objects. Purely materialistic science gives no evidence of the existence of such beings. So it seems we must assume we can know something about people that we cannot know if scientism is true. Further, even within science, scientists must act as if they know what numbers, truth, consistency, and logical implications are, but abstract objects (like numbers) and relations (like truth, consistency, and logical implication) are not material entities.

Finally, and most important, the thoughtful Christian should reject scientism on scriptural grounds, since it is directly incompatible with the biblical teaching that man has a natural knowledge of God.²⁰⁰ According to Romans 1:19–20, we can know of God's existence and attributes from studying nature, so our knowledge must not be limited to the physical causes of physical phe-

¹⁹⁹ Gödel's first incompleteness theorem shows that for any computer which incorporates the axioms of basic arithmetic, there will be statements true in that system which the computer cannot prove. His second theorem on consistency shows that if the computer is consistent it will not be able to prove that fact. Alan Turing showed that there cannot be a general purpose computer which can tell whether or not an arbitrary computer will ever halt (e.g., it cannot tell whether or not it contains an infinite loop). This is known as the "halting problem." Gödel's paper is available in Jean van Heijenoort, ed., *From Frege to Gödel: A Source Book in Mathematical Logic, 1879–1931*, 3rd ed., (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967). Alan Turing's paper, "On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem (1936)," is in *The Essential Turing: Ideas that Gave Birth to the Computer Age*, B. Jack Copeland, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁰⁰ For a discussion of the reality and limits of the natural knowledge of God, see the CTCR's report on *The Natural Knowledge of God in Christian Confession and Christian Witness*.

nomena. Likewise, Romans 2:14–15 says that everyone can know something of God's moral law, despite its being a transcendent, non-material entity. And Christ himself clearly distinguishes between body and soul and (unless one radically reinterprets the plain meaning of Jesus' words) this makes sense only if both the soul and the body are entities His hearers know about: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).²⁰¹ Suppose instead that Jesus had distinguished between some undefined X and our body. If Jesus had implied that our X is not the same as our body, and that we should worry about our X as well, this would have conveyed no information because people do not know what their X is. Jesus' actual remarks make sense because people have an innate knowledge or awareness of their souls, despite the fact that souls are not material entities.

It can be concluded that, in its strong form, scientism is directly opposed to an authentically Christian worldview. However, there are many weaker ideologies associated with materialism, and it is often claimed that these at least are compatible with a Christian worldview. There are several related attempts to suggest that Christians can, in effect, think as if they are materialists within the realm of science, even though they are not. Indeed, some people have claimed that the "scientific method" requires Christians to bracket their faith in this way. This view has become quite popular among Christian scientists. The two best-known versions of this strategy are "methodological naturalism" and the idea that science and religion are "non-overlapping magisteria."

c. Methodological naturalism

Philosophical naturalism is the claim that the natural world is all there is. It is possible to be a naturalist and not a materialist, as, for example, some "broad" naturalists²⁰² believe that souls and objective moral values are part of nature.²⁰³ Yet most naturalists are materialists of some sort (eliminative, reductive, or non-reductive), and for many, "naturalism" and "materialism"

²⁰¹ There are Christian physicalists (such as Kevin Corcoran, Nancey Murphy, and Trenton Merricks) who claim that human beings are or emerge from physical objects and who deny the existence of an immaterial soul, but it seems they must implausibly claim that Jesus was just using the thought-forms of the time (souls do not really exist, but the "soul" is short-hand for something revealed by modern science), which appears to imply that Jesus was either confused, misleading or simply wrong! Surely, if Jesus is God and knew that the "soul" does not really exist (or reduces to, or wholly depends on the body), he would not have contrasted the body with the soul as if they are two different things.

²⁰² Goetz and Taliaferro make the distinction between strict and broad naturalism in their book *Naturalism*.

²⁰³ Thus there are atheistic moral Platonists who think that nature includes both physical objects and forces and a realm of moral values or virtues. For example, see Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, *Morality Without God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Erik Wielenberg, "In Defense of Non-Natural, Non-Theistic Moral Realism," *Faith and Philosophy* 26:1 (2009), 23–41.

are interchangeable terms. Naturalism still denies that God exists, and if the naturalist is a materialist, he or she will typically deny the existence of the soul and objective moral values as well. However, these exclusions are not required if one embraces only *methodological* naturalism. Methodological naturalism is a rule of scientific method which includes a permission clause and an obligation clause. The permission clause says that scientists may believe in any entities they want, including supernatural entities like God and angels. The obligation clause says that within science, however, scientists must act as if naturalism is true (as if there are no supernatural entities).

The posture of methodological naturalism is defended by a number of supporting arguments. Some of these are *a priori* "in principle" arguments, to the effect that science must by its nature be limited to natural causes. Others are *a posteriori* "in fact" arguments, which aim to show that science has been most successful when it has been guided by methodological naturalism. These arguments are advanced by both Christians and non-Christians, but they have also been widely critiqued by both Christians and non-Christians. This suggests a cautious and balanced approach should be taken in discussing the merit of these arguments, one that attempts to hear out the concerns on both sides.

1) In-principle arguments for methodological naturalism

Some of the most common in-principle arguments are designed to show that such immaterial entities as God and the soul cannot be detected by science because science can only discern the existence of entities that behave in predictable ways. The problem with immaterial entities, it is argued, is that if an immaterial God (or the soul) has free will, there is no way for a scientist to control or predict what such a being will do. Therefore, it is claimed, science is better off studying material entities that behave in regular ways.

Thus, for example, Michael Ruse famously argued at the Arkansas creation-science trial of 1981–1982²⁰⁴ that science can only account for those phenomena produced in accordance with natural law. Having free will, neither God nor souls are governed by natural law, and so appealing to these supernatural entities does not qualify as a scientific explanation. Closely connected with Ruse's point are several other concerns. In science, we generally accept a result only if it is *replicable*. The free actions of God or a soul, however, need never be repeated, nor need diverse actions conform to some overarching pattern. For related reasons, some worry that appeal to God or souls is empirically sterile, because it leads to no interesting predictions and because science cannot work with such entities since they are not experimentally controllable. One cannot specify conditions, or design an experiment, such that it

²⁰⁴ See "A Philosopher's Day in Court" and "Witness Testimony Sheet," both in M. Ruse, ed., *But Is It Science? The Philosophical Question in the Creation/Evolution Question* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988).

is reasonable to expect God or a soul to do something, since they can always choose to do otherwise.

Another set of concerns centers on what counts as a scientific explanation. The worry is that appeal to God or souls is a "science stopper," which commits the "God of the gaps" (or "soul of the gaps") fallacy. The first concern is that if we say that God or a soul did something, there seems nothing more to be said. This would discourage scientists from further investigation of possible causal mechanisms. The second concern is that appeal to God or souls is really an argument from ignorance: it takes the form, *since we do not know how some surprising phenomenon arises, it must be that God or a soul did it*. But from the fact that we do not know a statement to be true, it does not follow that it is false—otherwise, centuries of uncertainty about whether the Earth is moving would imply that it was not. Thus, scientists may urge that our current inability to understand a natural mechanism that could produce a remarkable phenomenon does not mean that no such mechanism will ever be discovered.

All of these arguments have some force, in the sense that there are many areas of science in which the concerns raised make a great deal of sense. This is because much of science is concerned with investigating secondary causes within nature and pursues a paradigm sometimes called *operations science*. In operations science, scientists focus on repeatable and controllable²⁰⁵ and therefore predictable effects. They are interested in cases where it is possible for us to isolate and analyze a tractable, physical mechanism that accounts for the phenomenon. In this domain, methodological naturalism is, at the least, a very reasonable rule of thumb, because the goal is to discover a natural regularity, one which relates natural causes with natural effects in a predictable way. The underlying logic of operations science is inductive logic, which looks for repeating patterns of causation and infers a general law. This logic can only be used if there are predictable connections between causes and effects, and therefore is unsuited to investigating the free actions of God and souls.

Problems arise, however, if it is claimed that methodological naturalism is (or is part of) a universal scientific method, one that applies in all domains of science. This is mainly because not all of science is operations science. In the *historical science* paradigm, scientists focus on singular (non-repeatable) events. For example, they may investigate the origin of the cosmos, the mass extinction of dinosaurs, a particular volcanic eruption, a crime, or any other historical event which, in all of its specificity, cannot be repeated, even if there are similar events (e.g., other extinctions, volcanic eruptions or crimes of the same sort). There was just one origin of the cosmos, and Abraham Lincoln

²⁰⁵ Of course, scientists do not literally control the orbit of a planet. But it is controllable in the sense that the scientist can reliably specify the conditions which govern the planet's path, so that if those conditions obtain, the orbit is predictable. Operations science requires controllability in addition to repeatability. Even God or souls could repeat the same type of event, but that would not make it any easier to predict their future actions.

was assassinated only once. In historical science, the focus is not repeatable types of events, but particular, singular events. They are not controllable, because there are no conditions under which *those* events could recur. So in these cases, scientists are not looking for a law of nature and do not use inductive logic, since they are not trying to understand the relation between a class of causes and a class of effects, but a singular cause of a singular effect.

Instead, in historical science, scientists investigate the evidential traces surrounding a particular event, consider the range of possible, plausible explanations, and seek to infer the one that is the best current explanation.²⁰⁶ This turns out to be quite a sophisticated process, but the main idea is that the best current explanation will be the one that not only covers the available data, but also appeals to an entity with the causal powers required to explain it.²⁰⁷ This leads to a major contrast with operations science. It is to be expected that operations science will center its attention exclusively on the investigation of natural causes of natural effects, so it will operate within methodological naturalism. But in historical science, it appears impossible to justify an *a priori* presumption in favor of natural causes. To be sure, there are many cases where scientists have discovered particular natural causes of particular natural effects (e.g., the plate movements that caused a volcanic eruption). But in the competition for best data coverage and requisite causal power, there is no guarantee that the best candidate explanation will be one appealing solely to natural causes.

This is particularly clear if "natural causes" are defined to include only those undirected causes that feature in the theories of modern, physical science. These causes include events that happen of necessity (as a result of natural law) or by chance (e.g., the decay of a radioactive nucleus), but they exclude the intelligent actions of an agent (such as God or souls). There are several kinds of cases where an intelligent cause seems to be a better explanation of the phenomena than an undirected cause. In some cases, the intelligent cause clearly resides within nature; in other cases, it is plausible that the cause transcends nature, and may even be God, although this usually does not follow from the scientific evidence alone.

Examples of the first kind of case include forensic science, archaeology, cryptography, artificial intelligence, and the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI). For example, when forensic science investigates a fire, it will consider three main kinds of explanation: (1) natural necessity (e.g., the circuits were overloaded and this caused the fire); (2) chance (e.g., while repainting a building, workers accidentally caused contact between worn insulators creating a closed circuit and this caused the fire); or (3) design (e.g., there was a deliberate act of arson). To protect themselves against fraudulent

²⁰⁶ See Carol Cleland, "Methodological and Epistemic Differences between Historical Science and Experimental Science," in *Philosophy of Science*, 69:3 (September 2002), 474–496.

²⁰⁷ See Peter Lipton, *Inference to the Best Explanation* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

claims, insurance companies hire forensic scientists, and they may sometimes find that there are clear signs of intentional action making design a better explanation than chance or necessity. Similarly, when they discover unusual complex objects, archaeologists use tests to distinguish between the product of natural causes (e.g., a wind sculpture) and the product of design (an artifact such as an arrow head or a tablet inscribed with language). In cryptography, algorithms are applied to a complex signal to see if it is simply meaningless “noise” (a natural product) or if it contains a coherent, coded message (the result of intelligent design). Workers in artificial intelligence (AI) attempt to devise tests to distinguish between intelligent and unintelligent behavior and scientists in the SETI project consider which signals from outer space should convince us that there are other intelligent creatures in the cosmos.

Examples of the second kind include study of the “fine-tuning” of the laws of nature for intelligent life,²⁰⁸ study of the origin of the information found in all life, and the investigation of miracle claims. In cosmology, scientists have discovered evidence that the particular values of the variables in the fundamental laws of nature are finely tuned to permit intelligent life and even to make effective scientific discovery of those laws possible.²⁰⁹ In origin of life studies, the natural causes of chance and necessity have proven wholly inadequate to account for the large amount of complex specified information found in all life.²¹⁰ And the sheer number of well-attested miracle claims from around the world and throughout the centuries makes it hard to maintain that all of them are based on illusions or fraud.²¹¹

It is worth pointing out that in neither kind of case is the argument a “gap” argument in the objectionable sense of an argument from ignorance. When scientists infer human (or machine, or alien) intelligence, they do not argue that we do not know what caused some event, therefore an intelligent human (machine, or alien) did it. Scientists do not argue from what we as humans do not know, but from what we do know. We do know that natural causes generally do not produce the evidential traces surrounding some fires, or produce tablets of writing, or messages from space. We do know that intelligent causes (humans, etc.) often produce effects like these. So it is more

²⁰⁸ Defenders of the fine-tuning argument claim that the specific constants governing gravitation, electromagnetism, and the weak and strong nuclear forces fall within a very narrow (and hence improbable) range that permits complex, intelligent life to exist. Thus, it is argued, the values of these constants are “fine-tuned” to enable a specific goal (complex, intelligent life) and this provides evidence that our cosmos is designed to host such life.

²⁰⁹ See Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards, *The Privileged Planet*. See also Eric Metaxas, “Science Increasingly Makes the Case for God,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 25/2014, online at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/eric-metaxas-science-increasingly-makes-the-case-for-god-1419544568>.

²¹⁰ See Meyer, *Signature in the Cell*.

²¹¹ For the most thorough study to date, see Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011). Despite the subtitle, the book not only reviews the direct evidence for New Testament miracles, but also includes more recent reports from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and many contemporary examples from the West.

additional evidence from other disciplines may provide reasons to consider, for example, a specifically theistic design hypothesis.²¹³

So, while the design inference could be supplemented with other considerations (further data and background philosophical and theological arguments and theories) to produce an argument for a supernatural deity, this would go beyond the modest contribution of the design inference to science.

This caution is borne out by the unsurprising fact that naturalistic scientists and philosophers and their critics disagree about the proper explanation of apparent design in nature. In the case of apparently transcendent design (such as fine-tuning, the origin of the information in life, and miracles), naturalists attempt to show that the appearance of design is an illusion, while their opponents argue that the design is real.²¹⁴ Thus, for example, the claim that physical constants are finely-tuned to permit intelligent life is countered with the suggestion that ours is but one of many universes in a multiverse, and if there are enough universes, it is not so surprising that at least some support intelligent life. In response, defenders of fine-tuning point out that these other universes are necessarily unobservable and appear to violate Occam’s razor²¹⁵ (a single creator is a simpler hypothesis).

The claim that the information in life is a signature of intelligence has been countered by the proposal that natural properties are capable of spontaneously self-organizing into systems of greater and greater complexity, eventually resulting in life. In response, defenders of design have pointed out that known cases of self-organization produce repeating (periodic) structures, like crystals, but the assembly instructions for molecular machines and organs require highly aperiodic information.

Miracle claims are usually countered by some version of Hume’s two classic arguments: either we can never, even in principle, have good reason to accept a miracle claim, or in fact there are no credible miracle claims. In response, defenders of miracles have argued that Hume’s in-principle argument makes serious errors in logic,²¹⁶ and as Keener has shown, his in-fact argument is simply mistaken.²¹⁷

²¹³ Meyer, *Signature in the Cell*, 428–429.

²¹⁴ See for example the exchange between philosopher of physics Robin Collins, who defends the fine-tuning design argument, and atheist physicist Victor Stenger who attempts to debunk the argument in J. P. Moreland, Chad Meister, and Khalid Sweis, eds., *Debating Christian Theism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²¹⁵ See chapter 1, p. 39.

²¹⁶ See John Earman, *Hume’s Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Earman shows that Hume’s argument confuses the inductive probability appropriate for establishing laws of nature with the kind of probability relevant to establishing singular historical events.

²¹⁷ Keener, *Miracles*, focuses chapters 5 and 6 on explicitly responding to Hume, but the whole work provides extensive historical and contemporary evidence of reliably attested miracles.

reasonable to think an intelligent cause was responsible than that the effects are just the freak result of undirected causes. The arguments from fine-tuning, the information in life and apparent miracles proceed in just the same way, except that it seems no ordinary agent like a human (or even an alien) could account for the phenomena.

It is indeed open to the naturalist to say that we may find some purely natural cause, but it is an inference to the best explanation that allows for this. It says that intelligence may be the best *current* explanation, given the presently available evidence and the present range of competing explanations. This allows that new evidence or a better theory might come along and cause us to revise our opinion of the best explanation. This shows, however, that the findings of science are fallible and revisable, so it is certainly possible that a design explanation is unseated by new discoveries. But it does not follow that design cannot be the best available explanation given what we currently know.

To be sure, some cautions are in order. Inferring the existence of a superhuman, intelligent cause is not the same as inferring that this cause is God. Proponents of Intelligent Design emphasize that further philosophical and theological assumptions are typically required to draw these conclusions. For example, in his book, *The Edge of Evolution*, Behe notes that inferring design from the biological evidence does not by itself license identification of the designer, or imply that the designer is supernatural.

Like it or not, a raft of important distinctions intervene between a conclusion of design and identification of a designer. The designer need not even be a truly ‘supernatural’ being.²¹²

Likewise, Stephen Meyer argues that a scientific design inference does not establish that the designer is supernatural because it goes beyond what we can claim to know on the basis of our actual experience of finite designers.

The theory of intelligent design does not claim to detect a supernatural intelligence possessing unlimited powers.... Because the inference to design depends upon our uniform experience of cause and effect in this world, the theory cannot determine whether or not the designing intelligence putatively responsible for life has powers beyond those on display in our experience. Nor can the theory of intelligent design determine whether the intelligent agent responsible for information in life acted from the natural or the ‘supernatural’ realm. Instead, the theory of intelligent design merely claims to detect the action of some intelligent cause.... The theory of intelligent design does not claim to be able to determine the identity or any other attributes of that intelligence, even if philosophical deliberation or

²¹² Michael Behe, *The Edge of Evolution: The Search for the Limits of Darwinism* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 228.

The same dialectic is operative where the intelligent cause operates wholly within nature. Thus naturalistic philosophers have attempted to argue that human intelligence can itself be accounted for by purely natural causes, in either a reductive or non-reductive scheme. But there is an increasing number of sophisticated arguments to show that this project is not feasible. Intelligent agents are characterized by such remarkable features as consciousness, intentionality, and rationality, and philosophers have provided rigorous arguments that appear to demonstrate that none of these features can be explained naturalistically.²¹⁸

The important point is that these controversies about the proper interpretation of the data do nothing to show that inferring an intelligent cause is unscientific. On a given occasion, such an inference may be mistaken, or it may be shown to be mistaken later, but the same is true of scientific inferences in general. Many naturalistic inferences have been discredited (e.g., the claim that comets are atmospheric phenomena, that planetary orbits are the result of compound circular motion, that marsh gas causes malaria, that electromagnetic radiation is propagated by an invisible ether, etc.), but that does not mean they were unscientific. Further, while a design inference alone does not show that an intelligent cause is a supernatural being like God, and while such arguments that typically rely on additional theological and philosophical assumptions, it is not clear that there are *no* cases in which a sufficient range of scientific facts is best explained by a supernatural cause. Both the origin of the universe and the fine-tuning of the laws of nature seem poorly explained by any cause (intelligent or otherwise) within nature, since these signs of design pervade all of nature. And some remarkable, well-attested phenomena recorded in miracle claims also seem to require a supernatural explanation. So, methodological naturalism does not seem defensible as a universal requirement for every domain of science.

As many philosophers have argued, dogmatic adherence to methodological naturalism appears both to be “question-begging”²¹⁹ and to risk delinking science from its primary function of finding the truth about the natural world.²²⁰ The underlying principle of methodological naturalism begs the question because if we assert that science should only ever infer natural causes, then we have already assumed that there can be no scientific evidence of supernatural causes. While there are many cases where it is reasonable only

²¹⁸ See, for example, Angus Menegu, *Agents Under Fire: Materialism and the Rationality of Science* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), and J. P. Moreland, *The Recalcitrant Imago Dei*.

²¹⁹ See Robert Larmer, “Is Methodological Naturalism Question-Begging?” *Philosophia Christi* 5 (2003), 113–130.

²²⁰ See Bradley Monton, *Seeking God in Science: An Atheist Defends Intelligent Design* (Boulder, CO: Broadview Press, 2009); Steve Dilley, “Philosophical Naturalism and Methodological Naturalism: Strange Bedfellows?” *Philosophia Christi* 12 (2010), 118–141; Angus Menegu, “Against Methodological Materialism,” in Bealer and Koons, eds., *The Waning of Materialism*, 375–394.

to expect a natural causal explanation, some phenomena (e.g., fine-tuning, biological information, miracles) seem to resist such explanation, and it seems odd to suggest that science could not, even in principle, conclude that the best explanation of these phenomena is a supernatural cause. Further, asserting that science could never say this means that science can no longer claim to be a no-holds-barred attempt to gain knowledge of the world. After all, “science” means knowledge, and it is hard to see why the discovery that some phenomena are best explained by a supernatural cause does not qualify as something scientists could know. Why should science truncate its inquiry so that it only considers natural causes, instead of following the evidence wherever it leads?

In fact, if it is taken as a universal, *a priori* principle of science, methodological naturalism appears to be an irrational rule, as can be brought out by analogies. Suppose one drops one’s car keys at night, but decides to look for them only in the light of the street lamps, because one is afraid of the dark and it is harder to see. This provides no evidence that the keys are not lying in the dark. Or suppose a pirate with a map goes to an island to find buried treasure, and decides to search every region of the island except the one marked “Here there be dragons.” This provides no evidence that the treasure is not to be found where the alleged dragons are located. In general, refusing in principle to consider some kinds of causes provides no reason to think that they are not the true causes, or that the evidence does not point most strongly to those causes.

2) *In-fact arguments for methodological naturalism*

Quite a few defenders of methodological naturalism admit that there is no way to establish the principle on *a priori* grounds. Instead, they content themselves with the *a posteriori* argument that, as a matter of fact, excluding the supernatural from science has proven very fruitful for scientific discoveries.²²¹ As we saw in the previous chapter, Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, and Galileo all attacked the idea of design in the form of Aristotelian final causes. It can be argued that science has been very successful in many areas by only considering undirected causes operating wholly within nature. If science has had so much success ignoring intelligent causes, why should it remain open to discovering them?

The problem with this argument is that it is easy to explain why science obedient to methodological naturalism has been successful in some areas without taking this as evidence that it is a sound, general principle. As we saw earlier, when we are investigating the proximal, secondary causes of physical events, there is generally no reason to expect an intelligent cause (finite or supernatural). Since, for many people, this kind of “operations science” dominates their conception of what science is, it is not surprising if they con-

²²¹ See, for example, Patrick McDonald and Nivaldo J. Tro, “In Defense of Methodological Naturalism,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 38: 2 (2009), 201–229.

clude that methodological naturalism is a sensible rule. But as we also saw, historical science, by its nature, has to be open to intelligent causes: there is no way to rule out the possibility that the intelligent choice of a human, machine, alien, or transcendent being is the best explanation of a historical event. And, as philosopher of science Del Ratzsch has argued, to make the case that an intelligent cause of a historical event is supernatural, all one would have to do is provide evidence that none of the finite intelligences within nature is causally adequate to account for that event:

If unaided nature cannot generate some phenomenon, and there that phenomenon is in front of us, then obviously some other agency was involved. If we add the premise that humans couldn’t or didn’t produce the phenomenon, whereas aliens could have, we get the aliens-of-the-gaps arguments, which is precisely what underlies SETI. If we add the further premise that aliens couldn’t or didn’t ... then supernatural agency follows.²²²

Further, there are a number of historical facts about the universe that continue to resist the best naturalistic explanations, such as the ultimate origin of the universe, its fine-tuning for intelligent life and observation, the origin of biological life, the emergence of consciousness and of beings capable of grasping objective moral values. So it is not true that *all* of science provides *a posteriori* evidence of the soundness of methodological naturalism. Rather, our total evidence suggests a more modest conclusion: *methodological naturalism is a reasonable rule of thumb in some areas of science*. Obviously, this modest conclusion is compatible with the existence of good evidence for supernatural design in other areas of science.

At this point, some are likely to protest that scientists can simply maintain that any remarkable phenomenon is most likely the result of unknown natural causes. The problem with this response is that it misunderstands the logic used in historical science. As we saw earlier, in historical science scientists use a method of abductive logic (or inference to the best explanation) which examines the evidential traces surrounding a historical event and infers the *best current explanation*. What this means is that the inference is made in light of currently available data and theories. This inference may, of course, be upset by the discovery of new data or by the proposal of new theories, so abductive inference is unstable: today’s best explanation may not be the best tomorrow. However, the claim that an unknown natural cause is the best explanation is an illicit appeal to possible, future evidence, not to evidence that we actually have. It is, in effect, “promissory naturalism”: it issues a promissory note that there will be a natural explanation sometime in the future. Since science must confine itself to the data and available explanations

²²² Del Ratzsch, *Nature, Design and Science: The Status of Design in Natural Science* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001), 119.

it has, promissory naturalism is not part of a legitimate scientific attitude. Instead, it serves to immunize naturalism from the scientific data that would count against it. Surely, however, the main goal of science is to find the truth about the natural world, not to protect a preconceived philosophical idea (naturalism) from embarrassing data.

To conclude, it seems that one can make a strong case for methodological naturalism as a useful and successful rule of thumb in many areas of science, but neither *a priori* nor *a posteriori* arguments are sufficient to show that it is a universally valid principle. Thoughtful Christians who hope to present scientific evidence to support their claim of faith that we live in a designed world in which God also intervenes should not be deterred by methodological naturalism from making that case. They are well-advised to distinguish clearly between primary and secondary causes and between operations science and historical science, and to focus their argument on examples where there is no reasonable way to exclude the possibility of a supernatural, intelligent cause.

d. *The NOMA model of science and theology*

Closely related to methodological naturalism are attempts to put science and religion in watertight compartments. Thus the late paleontologist and popular science columnist Stephen Jay Gould claimed that science and religion should be regarded as belonging to “non-overlapping magisteria” (or NOMA for short).²²³ Gould borrows the term “magisteria” from the Catholic Church, in which it means a sphere of teaching authority. His suggestion follows the claim, widely attributed to Galileo, that the Holy Spirit’s intention in inspiring Scripture was to tell us how we go to heaven, not to tell us how the heavens go.²²⁴ If this dictum is true, and the teaching of the church rests on biblical revelation, then it seems reasonable to claim that the church’s proper sphere of authority is to tell mankind how it is saved, not to tell us how the natural world works. If so, it seems reasonable that science is the sole proper authority in the latter domain.

As critics have pointed out, however, an absolute divide between science and religion seems to be unfaithful to the goals of both biblical theology and science. If religion can say nothing authoritative about the natural world, then there is no such thing as natural knowledge of God—contrary to Romans 1 and 2. Moreover, we lose the fact that the Gospel itself makes historical claims—claims about what God in Christ did (and does) within ordinary history, claims that are in principle amenable to investigation by historical science. We know from Scripture that our cosmos and everything in it form a coherent reality because they are all the creations of Christ (Col. 1:16) in

²²³ See Stephen Jay Gould, *Rock of Ages*, and his “Nonoverlapping Magisteria,” *Natural History*, 16–22, 60–62.

²²⁴ For brief discussion over the historical question of whether Galileo was the origin of this dictum, see Edoardo Aldo Cerrato, “How to go to Heaven, and not how the heavens go,” available online at: <http://www.oratoriosanfilippo.org/galileo-baronio-english.pdf>.

whom all things hold together. The creation is vital to the Gospel because it sets forth God’s original will for mankind as beings made specially in His image, who by nature feared, loved, and trusted Him above all things. Since we fell from that state, losing original righteousness, God’s redemptive work is to heal us and restore us so that we may become the people He originally intended us to be. Without these facts about our creation, Christ’s redemptive work makes no sense: we cannot be restored to our originally intended state if we are unintended accidents of an indifferent cosmos. Most scandalous of all, Paul himself says that our faith is founded on the fact of the resurrection, and that if there were no such fact, our faith would be futile (1 Cor. 15:17). He makes it clear on numerous occasions that the resurrection was a fact of public history and that there was objective evidence to support it. So it appears that Gould is implicitly siding with those theologians like Karl Barth (1886–1968) who deny any role for natural theology and evidential apologetics. Gould also seems wrong about the domain of science: in principle, historical science could produce evidence that counts for or against the facticity of the resurrection.

In practice, as well, NOMA seems to be disingenuous, because while religion is told that it can make no cognitive (knowledge) claims about the natural world (i.e., it has no authority to make statements with scientific implications), this did not prevent Gould from making claims in the name of science which do have religious implications. Thus Gould asserts that human beings are “a wildly improbable evolutionary event, and not the nub of universal purpose ... We are the offspring of history, and must establish our own paths.”²²⁵

This is a statement loaded with religious significance: it claims that science has established that we are not the intended creations of God, that we are not here on earth for a divine purpose and that we do not have divine vocations that define the meaning of life. Rather, we must simply make up our own meanings. So apparently, while religion is prevented from making any claim with scientific implications, science can refute the religious claim of orthodox Christians that human beings are specially made in the image of God to be stewards of the natural world and to carry out the vocations that God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph. 2:10).

As developed by Gould, science includes not only the data and theories we would expect, but also philosophical interpretations which are anything but religiously neutral. So NOMA is really a misnomer. What Gould actually believes in is a *one-way overlapping magisteria* (OOMA): there is overlap from science into religion, but not from religion to science. In other words, while Gould officially portrays science and religion as separate but equal—or complementary—he is actually advancing a scientific imperialist model. According to this model science can continue to make inroads undermining

²²⁵ Gould, *Rock of Ages*, 206–207.

and supplanting the claims of religion, while religion is barred from defending itself or from making any critique of scientific overreach.

The sleight of hand that allows this double standard occurs because although it seems that religion is generously being offered autonomy in matters of ultimate or eternal significance, in fact it is not. Religion can talk about these matters so long as it does not make cognitive claims about objective reality, since that is the domain of science. But the fact is, religion does make claims about objective reality which are contrary to those of scientific materialism (it says we were specially created for a purpose, etc.). If religion is prevented from making these claims, it is reduced to a collection of subjective opinions and feelings about reality. One cannot claim that religion is a complementary domain of truth and then prevent it from saying anything that could be true.

e. Science and parascience

Gould's approach is only an example of a much broader tendency to promote the cultural dominance of science. Marilynne Robinson shows that in the attempt to supplant religion with science as the most authoritative source of knowledge, some have conflated science proper with what she calls "parascience." Robinson notes that parascientific literature "makes its case by proceeding, using the science of its moment, from a genesis of human nature in primordial life to a set of general conclusions about what our nature is and must be"²²⁶ In the process, Robinson argues, parascience commits two main fallacies. For one thing, it fallaciously treats current science as ultimate truth when, at best, it reflects only the latest, fallible theory. The shortcomings of such a theory could be shown tomorrow by new data or a more comprehensive competitor theory. It also moves from mere descriptions of natural fact to normative conclusions about the way things should be. In this way, for example, evolutionary ethicists claim to have discovered the historical origins of moral norms, confusing a scientific account of the origin of our moral judgments and feelings with an ultimate account of the origin and authority of moral norms.

This imperialist strategy leads its proponents to "deny the reality of phenomena it cannot accommodate, or to scold them for their irksome, atavistic persistence."²²⁷ For example, consciousness, authentic altruism, and religious experience are all either denied or explained away as illusions or delusions. There is a lack of open-minded investigation into these phenomena on their own terms: they have been judged problematic before that investigation begins. An important implication for Christian scientists is to distinguish carefully between the scientific data and scientific models themselves and

²²⁶ Marilynne Robinson, *Absence of Mind: The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 32–33.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

agenda-driven philosophical interpretations of those data and models which aim to compel concessions to a non-Christian worldview.

3. Philosophical contributions of Christianity to science

Christians should not only be on their guard against philosophies which attempt to appropriate the name and authority of science to advance their cause. They should also be ready to point out that Christianity is philosophically friendly to science because it provides some key principles that support the scientific enterprise. These principles fall into three broad categories: metaphysical, epistemological, and moral.

a. Metaphysical support for science

If science is conceived as the attempt to comprehend the natural world and critically depends on the discovery of universal laws of nature, then science assumes that nature is fundamentally rational. This assumption is not justified if nature is governed by many gods or local spirits as in polytheistic mythologies or animism. Neither is it justified by the assumption that the universe is simply a brute fact, an inexplicable accident. Furthermore, the vast success of science has shown that the assumption of a rational universe is a highly plausible one. The question which remains is: which worldview best justifies this assumption? Albert Einstein, who was neither a Christian nor an orthodox Jew, hints at the religious implications of these facts in a letter which reflects on the amazing fact that we can discover universal laws of nature. As noted earlier, he writes that

But *a priori* one should expect a chaotic world which cannot be grasped by the mind in any way ... [T]he kind of order created by Newton's theory of gravitation ... is wholly different. Even if the axioms of the theory are proposed by man, the success of such a project presupposes a high degree of ordering of the objective world That is the "miracle" which is being constantly reinforced as our knowledge expands.²²⁸

Together with other monotheists, Christians can point out that a good explanation of such a coherent, law-governed world is the existence of a single, rational, divine creator. Indeed, the whole idea of a universal law of nature is derived from the prior idea of a single, rational legislator, and if these laws apply throughout nature, then that legislator must be a supernatural being.

Theism thus provides metaphysical support for science by affirming that there is a natural order to discover. Without this assumption, as Einstein realized, science as we understand it today simply is not a feasible project.

²²⁸ Albert Einstein, *Letters to Solovine*, 131; also quoted earlier on pages 38–39.

However, an orderly world is not enough for science to be feasible. For it could certainly happen that the world is rational but human beings are not. Here, biblical theism has a decisive advantage because it asserts not only the creation of a law-governed world but also the creation of humans specially made in the image of God with the gifts required to be stewards of that world. This surely predicts that we are sufficiently rational to discern what is going on in nature.

b. Epistemological support for science

This metaphysical claim is the foundation for biblical theism's epistemological support for science. It is not merely that the world is rational and so are we, for that still might not be enough for science to be feasible. It might be that we are simply too limited in our rationality, or that our type of rationality is not attuned to the rationality governing nature. This could happen, for example, if God only provided us with the ability to discover local rules of thumb, but not the universal rules governing the cosmos as a whole. Lying behind the feasibility of science is the fact that one and the same logos (principle of rationality) is supremely exemplified in the mind of God. Thus it is imaged both in the natural world and the human mind, so that human reason is attuned to the rationality of nature and sufficient to discover its principles.

This confidence in our ability to discover the truth about the natural world encourages scientific work. Realistically, however, it is also balanced by a recognition of our creaturely limits and sin. We can conceive the idea of a universal law of nature, and yet our actual theories appear to capture only fallible approximations. We know that God's will and His ways are above our will and our ways, so we must take care to see what He has done rather than anticipate what we think He would do or assume that our ideas are better than His. Even then we can expect that our best efforts to interpret His work will still fall short. As Nathan Jastram has argued,²²⁹ being made like God, and yet not being God, gives just the right balance of confidence and humility so that we are sure science can progress without expecting final answers.

By contrast, it is fascinating to see that contemporary naturalists lurch between the extremes of excessive confidence and excessive humility. When they want to use science as a weapon to attack religion, they are often tempted into the parascience critiqued by Marilynne Robinson, fallaciously converting the temporal and contingent results of science into pronouncements on the ultimate meaning of life. But when they reflect soberly on the consequences of a naturalistic theory of man, they often conclude that we are not truth-oriented creatures, failing to see that this undercuts our confidence in the science alleged to have that consequence. Long ago, Lewis called attention to the self-defeating nature of "scientific" arguments that undermine our confidence in human rationality:

²²⁹ Nathan Jastram, "Scientists Called to Be Like God," in Menzies, ed., *Reading God's World*, 243–269.

After studying his environment man has begun to study himself. Up to that point, he had assumed his own reason and through it seen all other things. Now, his reason has become the object: it is as if we took out our eyes to look at them. Thus studied, his own reason appears to him as the epiphenomenon which accompanies chemical or electrical events in a cortex which is itself the by-product of a blind evolutionary process. His own logic, hitherto the king whom events in all possible worlds must obey, becomes merely subjective. There is no reason for supposing that it yields truth.²³⁰

The severity of this problem does not seem to be recognized by leading evolutionary psychologists. For example, Steven Pinker admits that in his view, "our brains were shaped for fitness, not for truth."²³¹ Lewis Wolpert claims that "our brains contain a belief generating machine, an engine that can produce beliefs with little relation to what is actually true."²³² With no sense of irony, Wolpert later claims that "Science provides by far the most reliable method for determining whether one's beliefs are valid."²³³ The problem, of course, is that if our belief-forming mechanism favors useful but largely false beliefs, this will also include our scientific beliefs. And even if natural selection could somehow hone beliefs relevant to our everyday survival so that they were mostly true, this still would not be good grounds to trust recent scientific theories, because they played no role in the survival of our ancestors. In fact, Steven Pinker emphasizes that recent scientific advances solve problems that our ancestors never encountered.

Our ancestors encountered certain problems for hundreds of thousands or millions of years—recognizing objects, making tools, learning the local language, finding a mate, predicting an animal's movement, finding their way—and encountered certain other problems never—putting a man on the moon ... proving Fermat's last theorem.²³⁴

The problem-solving abilities of our ancestors give no reason for confidence in our ability to solve scientific problems that go far beyond the requirements of survival. It seems that the prediction of naturalistic evolution is that human beings would have too limited and parochial a grasp of rationality to account for the discovery of universal laws of nature. And of course, we did put a man on the moon.

²³⁰ C. S. Lewis, "The Poison of Subjectivism," in Walter Hooper, ed., *Christian Reflections* (London: Fount, 1991), 98.

²³¹ Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 305.

²³² Lewis Wolpert, *Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007), 140.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 216.

²³⁴ Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, 304.

c. Moral support for science

The Bible provides several foundational moral parameters for science. It gives reasons to think that we are *permitted* to do science—because nature is not sacred—and we are *required* to do science—as it is part of what it means to pursue our vocations as stewards of creation. Furthermore, as with all legitimate vocations, science was instituted as a means of loving and serving our neighbors, and God provides for our neighbors in part through the work of scientists. This means that so long as we are using science to serve our neighbor's needs in a way that is compatible with our stewardship obligation to preserve the Lord's world as a trust for future generations, we *should* do science. But it also means that God provides boundaries for legitimate science: it must not be used to harm others or the environment in such a way that it harms the welfare of future generations.

Thus again, there is the need for a right balance of confidence and humility. Scripture demonstrates that science can be a God-pleasing vocation! And yet, through His teaching about the purpose of vocation as a means of loving and serving our neighbor, God also reminds us of our responsibilities not to use scientific knowledge and techniques in ways that violate the moral laws that govern all vocations.

4. Conclusion

We have seen that, clustered around materialism, there are a number of philosophical ideas often associated with science which create difficulties for the Christian scientist. This chapter has attempted to explain these ideas and to offer some strategies for effective response. Thoughtful Christians need to gain the critical distance to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these ideas for those intent on pursuing science as a vocation. In particular they should not allow themselves to be taken captive by some worldly philosophy (Col. 2:8), such as some version of materialism that biases the empirical method and encourages the thought that God's actions in the world cannot be known. We also briefly noted ways in which the Bible offers foundational assumptions about reality which are friendly to the work of scientists. It should be clear that faithful Christians are above all concerned about *Truth*. They seek and highly value the whole truth revealed in God's Word and the whole truth revealed in God's world, and should be vigilant for any attempt to define or use science to ignore or undermine God's revelation. With both eyes open, Christians should do their very best to embrace all the truth He has revealed to us. This requires a sound reading of both Scripture and the scientific data—which is the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter IV

Biblical Knowledge and Scientific Knowledge

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to consider how we know specific things as Christians and to consider whether there is a genuine conflict between what we know from Scripture and what we know from modern science. We will begin by comparing the kind of knowing that is critical for science and the unique sort of knowing that is central to Christianity (section 2). In section 3 we will identify important principles for knowing (understanding) what the Scripture means, and then we will consider how these basic principles of scriptural interpretation can help us to handle apparent conflicts between science and Scripture while upholding the final authority of God's Word. In section 4 we will explore more deeply some examples where biblical and scientific truth claims seem to conflict.

2. Knowing as a Christian

Consider the meaning of "we know" in the following statements from earlier in this document.

- "We now **know** that Kepler's 'laws' are only approximations to the truth."²³⁵
- "And it seems we **know** some things ... by introspection, by direct, first-person access to an immaterial mind or soul, not via the impersonal observations of materialistic science, such as observations and manipulations of brains."²³⁶
- "We do **know** that natural causes generally do not produce the evidential traces surrounding some fires, or produce tablets of writing, or messages from space. We do **know** that intelligent causes (humans, etc.) often do produce effects like these."²³⁷
- "We **know** from Scripture that our cosmos and everything in it form a coherent reality because they are all the creations of Christ

²³⁵ Chapter 1, p. 49. Emphasis added.

²³⁶ Chapter 3, p. 80. Emphasis added.

²³⁷ Chapter 3, p. 85. Emphasis added.

(Col. 1:16) in whom all things hold together."²³⁸

- "We **know** that God's will and His ways are above our will and our ways."²³⁹

We may often speak of "knowing" things that we learn from science and "believing" things that we learn from the Bible. As the statements above show, however, we can just as easily speak of knowing things like the will of God and the identity of the Creator as we can speak of knowing things like astronomical theories or the difference between human writing and naturally produced marks on a piece of wood or stone. There are very real similarities between knowing things that we learn from each of "God's books," His Word and His works in nature.

Perhaps the most immediately apparent similarity is that whether learning from God's Word or His works, an interpreter is confronted by data. Whether it is written words in a text or the results of scientific experimentation, both the reader of Scripture and the scientist are interpreting information that confronts them. Each must analyze, distinguish, separate, categorize, and arrange the data in ways that will prove meaningful to himself and—hopefully—to others.²⁴⁰

The use of prior knowledge is another common feature of knowing things based on God's Word and His works. In both cases the interpreter makes use of what he or she already knows while studying this new "data set." Reading Scripture requires knowing vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and more, just as the scientist uses prior knowledge of his field.²⁴¹

A third common feature is that in both cases the way questions are framed will have an important impact on the answers that are discovered. Chapter 3 pointed out that scientism may boast of answers to questions concerning the

²³⁸ Chapter 3, pages 91–92. Emphasis added.

²³⁹ Chapter 3, p. 95. Emphasis added.

²⁴⁰ Our interpretation of data involves assessing the veracity of information we receive on a daily basis and determining whether or not (or to what degree) we can trust that data. Satiric publications such as "The Onion" are not intended to be taken literally but rather to be read as humor—so interpretation of data also involves taking into account factors such as literary genre, contextual issues, and authorial intent. As we continually assess events in the world around us, events that repeat themselves are often "trusted" to recur again (i.e., we "trust" that the sun will rise each day, since it has done so every day of our lives). We also look to the sources of information and are typically more inclined to trust those who are recognized as authorities in various fields of expertise and experience, such as doctors, lawyers, police, teachers, and pastors. In science, measures such as the impact factor of a journal help assessing the degree to which certain studies and conclusions are trusted and deemed to be reliable. Doubt and distrust of published conclusions occur when researchers are unable to repeat or confirm what has been published by others, or when evidence to the contrary is presented—in essence "debunking" the original research.

²⁴¹ For an excellent example of how similar these two processes are, see Giovanni Manetti, *Theories of the Sign in Classical Antiquity*, trans. C. Richardson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); see especially pages 36–52.

existence of God, even though that question was not addressed (or capable of being addressed) by the research claimed as the basis for denying His existence.²⁴² Bible readers are also vulnerable to such misunderstandings. We need mention here only those who take up the Revelation of John looking for indications of the precise date of Christ's return. We might say that Luther's breakthrough as a reader of the Bible came when he allowed the text to reframe the questions for him. Rather than reading the Bible as difficult-to-the-point-of-impossible guidance for the sinner desiring to appease an angry god, Luther began to read it as the account of how God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to Himself.

A fourth feature was once readily accepted by almost everyone in both the sciences and theology. We earlier referred to the relationship between "God's 'Two Books.'"²⁴³ To speak of God's Word and His works as "books" was a reminder to the "reader" that each of these "books" had the same Author and that *His* truth should be sought in reading *both* of them. Readers of both "books" would have agreed that God's Word and world share a common source and intention.

Such common ground no longer exists, however. Peter Harrison's conclusion seems to describe quite accurately the situation we now face:

Indeed, that there is now such a disparity between our approaches to words and things, that scientific and literary activities have become so alien to each other, that the 'two cultures' share increasingly less common ground, is owing largely to the break-down of that universal hermeneutics which, in pre-modern times, had informed the study of both the book of scripture and the book of nature. The transformations which brought on the birth of modernity moved western culture from the era of 'the two books' to that of 'the two cultures.'²⁴⁴

The "two cultures" are viewed as largely incompatible by many. At best they are viewed as "non-overlapping magisteria,"²⁴⁵ and at worst as flatly contradictory or even combative.

Where do we go from here as Christians? Do we cede to science the authority to trump any biblical claim except those that are the most narrowly "spiritual"? Does science "get the last word" as to what humanity can *really* know?

²⁴² See above, chapter 3, 76–78.

²⁴³ Chapter 1, 20–25.

²⁴⁴ Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*, 267. The concept of "two cultures" builds on the discussion initiated by C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), whose concerns are briefly discussed in the introduction of this report on p. 1–3.

²⁴⁵ See above, chapter 3, 91–93.

Such questions lead us to consider one more example of knowing, this one from the New Testament:

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of **knowing** Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may **know** him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Phil. 3:8-11; emphasis added)

The apostle Paul writes here of knowing someone, a *person*—Christ Jesus—as his Lord (v. 8) and receiving from Him a new righteousness unlike his own (righteousness by faith rather than from law; v. 9).²⁴⁶ Moreover, he seeks to know Christ in a way that includes knowing His power and being made like Him. To know Christ in this way, says Paul, causes a re-valuing of everything else: from Paul's possessions to his understanding of his own capabilities to his willingness to accept suffering. This intimate knowledge of Christ is of supreme value for the apostle.

We should recognize that this type of knowing is of paramount importance not only for Paul, but for Christianity as a whole. This document argues rationally (that is, on the basis of reason) against scientism's biased claim to be the final arbiter of all knowledge. At the same time, however, it is important to confess that *reason or rational arguments are not the ultimate basis for the knowing that Christianity claims for itself*. Rather, Christians *know* that the wisdom of God confounds all human wisdom (1 Cor. 3:19). How do we *know* this? These truths flow out of *knowing* Christ Jesus, who is God's very truth made flesh (John 1:14), God in the nature of a man (Phil. 2:6; Heb. 1:3), and the very wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24).

So, although Christianity values reason highly, it recognizes that "it ought not be praised at Christ's expense."²⁴⁷ Indeed as beneficial as reason can be,

²⁴⁶ Such knowing reflects the fact that the verb "to know," in both its primary Greek (*ginosko*) and Hebrew (*yada*) forms, can have both a more personal dimension and also one that is more narrowly intellectual. (Spanish and some other languages use different verbs to express these two dimensions.) Scripture frequently emphasizes the personal sense. For example, consider its use in Exodus 5:2. "But Pharaoh said, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not *know* the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.'" Here the word "know" signifies the intimate knowledge of a relationship. Certainly Pharaoh was acquainted with basic assertions about Israel's God. He rejected those assertions and also what they would require of him. So also Jesus—whose omniscience enables Him to know all things—says in Matthew 7:21-23 of "workers of lawlessness," "I never *knew* you." A saving, intimate relationship had not been established. These negative examples are contrasted with the same positive use of "know" in Philippians 3.

²⁴⁷ Ap IV, 24. KW 124.

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it is necessary to declare with Martin Luther that it is "pure error" to say that human beings possess "sound reason and a good will."²⁴⁸ Christianity teaches that in a fallen world, where reason is corrupted, there is no more certain knowledge than to know Christ by faith. Moreover, the Christian faith recognizes that knowing Christ rightly can be done not by human imagination—for that is just as fallible as human reason is—but only by reading the only source of certain truth about Him, the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures.²⁴⁹ Both the clarity and authority of God's Word, centered in Christ and the Gospel (Luke 24:44-48), exceed God's book of the world.²⁵⁰ Christ Himself affirms the truth of the Bible which testifies to Him when He assures us, first, that the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) which He heard and fulfilled were entirely trustworthy, even in seemingly little details, for their authors are men "to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).²⁵¹ He then further assures His apostles, whose eyewitness testimony is the foundation of all the New Testament Scriptures, that His Spirit would ensure their witness to Him (John 14:26).

Therefore, as certainly as Christians hold to Christ, knowing Him as their Savior and Lord, with equal certainty they also hold to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, knowing them to be the Word of God. We hold fast to the Scriptures as we hold to Christ, knowing that in them we have the testimony not only of men, but also God's own Word and His *supernatural revelation* that makes Christ known and is "profitable" for all teaching (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Therefore it is important to state clearly that even as the church *confesses its faith in Christ*, so also its conviction of the complete trustworthiness of the Holy Scriptures is a confession of faith. As the CTCR expresses it elsewhere:

Even though there are differences and variety in the Sacred Writings which sometimes perplex us because we can find no harmonization for them that satisfies human reason, faith confesses the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God. Since the inerrancy of the Scriptures is a matter of faith, it is by definition

²⁴⁸ SA III.1.4; KW 311. A more detailed discussion of Luther's thoughts about human reason can be found in B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005 [previously published by Oxford University Press, 1962]).

²⁴⁹ See CTCR, *Natural Knowledge of God*, 34: "Thus, even while acknowledging the fact of man's natural knowledge of God, the Confessions likewise consistently acknowledge its strict limitations, and even potential dangers if unchecked by the biblical revelation. As previously noted in this regard, the Confessions do not so much stress the lack of natural knowledge about God as they do its falseness. The natural knowledge of God sets forth a distorted picture of Him. It is incapable of showing us the God who justifies and saves from sin."

²⁵⁰ See Martin H. Franzmann, *Seven Theses on Reformation Hermeneutics* (Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1969), available at <http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=681>. Franzmann refers to the Gospel, justification by grace through faith in Christ, as the *res*, or central "subject matter" of Scripture.

²⁵¹ See J.A.O. Preus, *It Is Written* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 27-28.

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a doctrine which is believed solely on the basis of the witness of the Scriptures concerning themselves and not on the basis of empirical verification.²⁵²

As God's Word, the authority of Scripture is inextricably bound up with the authority of God Himself. This argument has been of critical importance to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod throughout its history, but particularly in the 20th century.²⁵³ Thus, in its 1932 "Brief Statement," the LCMS declared:

the Holy Scriptures differ from all other books in the world in that they are the Word of God ... because the holy men of God who wrote the Scriptures wrote only that which the Holy Ghost communicated to them by inspiration, 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21.... Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10:35.²⁵⁴

Further, in its 1973 document, "A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles," the Synod underscores that "the opinion that Scripture contains errors is a violation of the [Reformation's] *sola scriptura* [principle], for it rests upon the acceptance of some norm or criterion of truth above the Scriptures."²⁵⁵ This is a very important argument. The stance of the Reformation is that the Scriptures alone (*sola scriptura*) have final authority: they are the final court of appeal and hence cannot themselves be judged by any higher standard.

It is important to add, however, that this is not a new doctrine or teaching, but is reflected, as indicated, both in the Scriptures themselves and in the writings of Martin Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. Thus, in the *Large Catechism* Luther confesses the complete truthfulness of Scripture, saying "we know that God does not lie [Titus 1:2]. My neighbor and I—in short, all

²⁵² *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations* (The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1975), 10.

²⁵³ Controversy within the LCMS and between LCMS theologians and Lutherans from other traditions was acute in the latter half of the 20th century, culminating in the 1970s. This inner-Lutheran debate, however, was reflected within all of Protestantism as well, with a gradual division between so-called mainline Protestants and evangelical Protestants resulting. For an evangelical perspective, see the "Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics" (1982), available online at <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago2.html>. Article 1 argues that, because Christ himself affirms the complete trustworthiness of Scripture, "one cannot reject the divine authority of Scripture without thereby impugning the authority of Christ."

²⁵⁴ "Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod" (Adopted 1932), section 1, "Of the Holy Scriptures," available at <http://www.lcms.org/doctrine/doctrinalposition>.

²⁵⁵ "A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles," The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

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people—may deceive and mislead, but God's word cannot deceive."²⁵⁶ Thus, this conviction is not an outgrowth of the Fundamentalist-Modernist debates of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, nor is it a conservative Lutheran idiosyncrasy. As Ralph Bohlmann has pointed out, historians recognize that

Belief in the divine inspiration, infallibility, and authority of Holy Scripture was common property of Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and other parties involved in the controversies dealt with in the [16th century] Lutheran Confessions....

Indeed, the affirmation of the trustworthiness and authority of Scripture can be traced prior to the Reformation. Bohlmann goes on to quote Arthur Carl Piepkorn.

If there was one point of universal agreement among all of these [Calvin, Tridentine decrees, pre-Reformation Scholasticism] aside from the nude assertions of the Ecumenical Creeds, it was the authority, the inspiration, and the inerrancy of the Sacred Scriptures.²⁵⁷

All of this shows that there can well be and often is a very real barrier that exists between Christian convictions and *scientism*. Conditioned as our culture is by scientism, many people assume that science has the magisterial authority to trump the claims of any other source, including Scripture. In so doing, scientism assumes that Scripture is a merely human document consisting of fallible, revisable claims. Scripture, from the perspective of scientism, is not a revelation from God, but, at most, a book by authors who claim some level of spiritual enlightenment. Therefore it may, of course, contain errors. Yet, as we have shown, this is incompatible with the assertions of Scripture, with long-standing ecumenical Christian tradition, and with the inner logic of Christian revelation—for it directly contradicts the very character of God, who is omniscient, omnipotent and holy. God knows all truth (omniscience, see Ps. 147:5; John 21:17; Heb. 4:13; 1 John 3:20). He can do all that He intends (omnipotence, see Ps. 115:3; Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26; Rom. 11:36; Heb. 1:3), including communicating the attributes of His divine nature in the humanity of Jesus (Col. 1:19; Heb. 3:1). Thus He can also communicate truthfully through human language and the words of mortal men.²⁵⁸ God is holy. He does not deceive us, and indeed, by His very nature, He cannot do so (Num.

²⁵⁶ *Large Catechism*, IV, 57; KW 464. The German text of the LC seems to emphasize the idea that God will not lie or deceive; the Latin includes the thought that he cannot err. The difference is not profound and the meanings are by no means mutually exclusive. See also the translation in *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord*, trans. W.H.T. Dau and G.F. Bente, trans. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 457.

²⁵⁷ Bohlmann, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, 29. The parenthetical brackets and their contents are in the original.

²⁵⁸ One frequently encounters the idea that what is "written" in Scripture is sure and certain because it is nothing less than God's Word. For example, see 2 Chr. 34:21; Jesus' responses to Satan in his temptation; (Matt. 4:4-11; Luke 19:46; John 15:25; Rom. 3:10; 1 Cor. 14:21; and countless other examples). A similar expression which indicates directly that God himself deigns to

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23:19; Ps. 25:8; Is. 6:3; Heb. 6:18). Thus God's word is *infallible* (trustworthy and reliable; incapable of mistake) and *inerrant* (without error) because He is completely *trustworthy* and *without error*.

To be sure, many contemporary theologians have attempted to qualify infallibility and inerrancy by claiming that, while Scripture can be relied on in all "spiritual" matters (such as those concerning our salvation and morality), it need not be inerrant in its claims about "secular" matters, including factual claims about history and science. However, such a claim inherently drives a wedge between God's work as Creator and His works of redemption and spiritual renewal. Orthodox Christianity holds the spiritual and the physical together as two spheres in which God is equally at work. To eliminate one sphere of His work is to eviscerate His work within the other. Essential Christian beliefs have no spiritual significance if they are not grounded in historical fact. Thus, a proper understanding of biblical revelation within history is necessary:

The Holy Scriptures do not purport to be a textbook of universal history offering an exhaustive account of the history of all nations and peoples from the beginning of time up to the various periods when the Biblical books were written. . . .

The Bible, however, was written to bear witness to the action of God in *human history* to accomplish the redemption of fallen mankind. If Biblical historical records are unreliable or even false, then God's saving actions in history are called into question too.²⁵⁹

One sees this point most dramatically in Paul's straightforward assertion that the truth of the Christian faith depends on the historical fact of the resurrection: "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. . . . But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:17, 20). Because an infallible God inspires all of Scripture, we should agree that "since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God . . . they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth."²⁶⁰

As God's Word, Scripture is necessarily true (John 17:17). God's Word, not science, is the final highest authority for truth even as God always stands in judgment over humankind. But how do we best make use of this "final court of appeal"? Is the Bible the highest standard only in certain ways? How does the Bible become "profitable" (2 Tim. 3:15–17)—particularly with respect to the relationship of science and theology? How are we to read the book of Scripture?

use human language are the frequent expressions "Thus says the Lord" (e.g., Ex. 5:1; Is. 44:2) and "declares the Lord" (e.g., Is. 43:10–12; Jer. 31:31–34).

²⁵⁹ CTCR, *The Inspiration of Scripture*, 11.

²⁶⁰ "A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles," emphasis added.

3. Reading God's Word— basic principles of interpretation

We have already opened the door to such questions of interpretation earlier in this chapter, by emphasizing that Christians—Lutheran Christians in particular—need always to keep Christ and Scripture together. The Bible is God's Word. In knowing Christ we are led of necessity to value the book of Scripture above the "book" of the world. Only through Scripture's revelation of God in Christ and His justifying and reconciling work can we know Christ authentically and truthfully. The crucial point to emphasize here is that this orientation toward the centrality of the Gospel of Christ and His justifying work for the world is presented by Scripture itself as the way it should be read. Our whole approach to the interpretation of biblical texts is guided by this important orientation. This is the central interpretive principle for the Christian reader of the Bible.²⁶¹

Having identified this central principle, it is helpful to identify additional principles that guide Lutheran Christians in their reading of the Scriptures. Nowhere do the Lutheran Confessions spell out for us a specific list of interpretive principles to which we must all subscribe. Though many Lutheran theologians have provided hermeneutical²⁶² and exegetical²⁶³ guidelines, none of these lists has, in itself, achieved confessional status among us.²⁶⁴ The Bible itself does not simply provide a list of interpretive principles by which

²⁶¹ See Franzmann, *Seven Principles of Reformation Hermeneutics*, who unfolds this further. He emphasizes that the *res* of justification by grace through faith in Christ—Scripture's center—requires that one go back and forth from the words (*verba*) of Scripture to this *res* (summary of its message), "letting Scripture interpret Scripture" and so affirm its central truth (Thesis V, p. 6). This central truth however, does not contradict other truths that are less central, such as the sovereignty of God, the mighty acts of God in Scripture, that he discloses Himself in Scripture, or that the Bible is His verbally inspired and infallible Word (pp. 10–11). Moreover, the Christocentricity of the Bible leads further, into the use of interpretive tools which reckon with the fact that Christ is revealed through human authors (Thesis VII, pp. 11–12).

²⁶² *Hermeneutics*, derives from a Greek verb, *ἡρμηνεύω* (*hermeneuō*), which was used both in the sense of translating a text from a foreign language and in the sense of interpreting any text. In biblical studies, hermeneutics may be simply defined as "principles of interpretation." See James W. Voelz, *What Does This Mean? Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World*, 2nd ed., rev. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 13.

²⁶³ *Exegesis* derives from the Greek verb *ἐξηγέομαι* (*exēgōmai*), which was used as far back as the fifth century before Christ to indicate the interpretation of a text. Breaking the verb apart into its compounds yields the idea of "leading something out," the idea of this usage being that the interpreter brings out the meaning that is in the text. A simple definition of *exegesis* as a process is "the actual interpretation of the Scriptures." Voelz, 13.

²⁶⁴ In addition to Franzmann, already noted, see *Aspects of Biblical Hermeneutics: Confessional Principles and Practical Applications*, *Concordia Theological Monthly Occasional Papers* No. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966); Ralph A. Bohlmann, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968). Also helpful in this regard is the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod), *Gospel and Scripture: The Interrelationship of the Material and Formal Principles in Lutheran Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972).

all its passages are to be understood. There is some risk, then, in providing any list here, since it could easily distract us from our purpose, which is to provide some guidance for the discussion of the real matter at hand here, the relationship between "biblical knowledge" and "scientific knowledge."

The Lutheran Confessions do, however, *model* an approach to Biblical interpretation. As a consequence, when confessional Lutherans have identified principles of interpretation, they always exhibit a significant degree of overlap, even though each has individual characteristics or emphases.²⁶⁵ The principles below are generally accepted and may be helpful for our discussion here.²⁶⁶

1. Pay attention to the context, both literary and historical.
2. Begin with the plain meaning of a text.
3. Scripture interprets Scripture.
4. Interpret Scripture in light of the rule of faith.
5. Interpret Scripture in view of Christ.
6. Distinguish Law and Gospel, sin and grace.
7. Attend to the "then and there" meaning as well as the "here and now" meaning.

These principles are not arranged in priority, but in accordance with the actual task of interpretation. The first two principles are of identical importance for any reader reading any document. One must always *attend to the context* of anything written if one wishes to understand it. Luther once said, "Unless one understands the things under discussion, one cannot make sense of the words."²⁶⁷ That is true whether one is reading the Bible or the *Wall Street Journal*. For example, the meaning of a particular word, a particular set of letters, will change as it moves through history or from one language to another. Anyone who lives in a multi-lingual or multi-generational setting will have to acknowledge the truth of this observation.

²⁶⁵ Ralph Bohlmann, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions*, identifies four central principles: that the Bible is God's Word in its every word; that God the Holy Spirit must enlighten the interpreter to believe the Bible's truths; that the Bible contains both words of condemnation (Law) and forgiveness (Gospel), and the two must be carefully distinguished; and that Christ is the center of all Scripture. Another helpful set of principles is in James Voelz, *What Does This Mean?* (352–358), who lists three: the Christological Principle (Christ's centrality is "the touchstone for the whole" (363); the Coherence Principle (since God is author of all Scripture, it has a unified message), and the Integrity Principle (each individual passage must be allowed to retain its particular understanding and truth).

²⁶⁶ These principles are adapted from the list provided by Lane A. Burgland, *How to Read the Bible with Understanding*, 2d ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015 [forthcoming]).

²⁶⁷ Franzmann, *Seven Theses*, 2.

It is sadly obvious that the Bible can be misused and that quotations from it can be used in twisted and corrupt ways. The Bible itself recognizes this. The apostle Peter warns about the misuse of Paul's epistles and of other Scriptures: "There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures" (2 Pet. 3:16). So it is that the Bible is to be read in the recognition of the significance that the contexts of its particular books and segments have for its meaning. The coming of Christ marks the great difference in the context of the Old Testament in comparison to the New. Each of the Gospels has its own contextual traits. Although both James and Paul write epistles, each writes from within a different context, and, indeed, each of Paul's epistles (and every other biblical book) must be considered within its own context.

Secondly, every document must be taken, first, at face value (*accepting Scripture's plain meaning*).²⁶⁸ That is, one reads before he reacts to what he reads. This is all the more important, however, for one who reads Scripture. We pass judgment, of necessity, on the writings of other people, recognizing that they are not infallible. We cannot, however, pass judgment on God's Word, for God judges us. Consider a woman who reads in a newspaper about a miraculous claim. She understands exactly what is claimed, because the meaning is plain, but she may also doubt that it is true because such miraculous events are, by their very definition, uncommon. The presupposition that nature is all that exists (hence, that natural laws are absolute) leads many to treat Scripture in an identical manner. It leads people to doubt or read an allegorical or personal "existential" meaning into a biblical text that makes a miraculous claim, and thus simply to ignore the claim itself. For one who receives the Scriptures as God's Word, however, unless the biblical text itself warrants such an alternative reading, this cannot constitute sound exegesis. That such a reading finds support in a popular (or academically fashionable) worldview external to the text is irrelevant: a sound reading must be grounded in *what the text actually says*. The faithful reader of Scripture takes the plain meaning—of a healing by Jesus, for example—and accepts its truth without quibbles, for he or she knows Jesus to be Lord of heaven and earth.

In order for the church to build doctrines confidently on the statements of Scripture, its focus must be on their primary and intended meaning rather than (like medieval scholastics or modern critics) on speculation about possible allegorical or mythological readings. This does not ignore the fact that figures of speech clearly do occur in Scripture. For example, mountains metaphorically sing for joy (e.g., Ps. 98:8; Is. 42:11; 44:23; 49:13). God the Father has a "right hand," but not one made of flesh and bone (e.g., Ex. 15:6; Ps. 110:1; 118:15; Luke 22:69; Rom. 8:34). Taking account of the literary genre of a text, on the basis of the internal evidence supplied by Scripture itself, is crucial

²⁶⁸ The plain meaning of the text includes the assumption that the text is using language in a way that is consistent with its use at the time of the composition of the text itself. See the discussion of principle 7 below.

here. The Psalms and other biblical poems, for example (as one might expect), are filled with figures of speech. But the reports of Jesus' miracles (e.g., his miracles of healing in Luke 5:12–13; 5:24–25; 6:10; 7:10; 7:14–15) provide no internal basis for the assumption that they are describing anything other than actual events in a straightforward way. Any claim that these reports were merely metaphorical or were parables rather than descriptions of events would seem to depend on the exegete's prior assumption that miracles cannot really happen. It is not grounded in the content or structure of the texts, which naturally read as historical narrative. A speculative approach that privileges an allegorical reading of Scripture makes it easy to dismiss passages of Scripture that appear to create scientific, cultural or personal difficulties by simply declaring them to have an obscure meaning. In this way many have dismissed, for example, the opening verses of Genesis as mythical or allegorical, because they find them to be in conflict with a naturalistic evolutionary account of the origin of life and of its diversity.

The third principle, that *Scripture interprets Scripture*, also has a connection to the exegesis of other books and documents. When a novel introduces a character, it builds on that same characterization throughout. If a science text defines a term, the reader will then be able to understand that term when it is used elsewhere in the same text without definition. Similarly, the Bible tells of God, providing a characterization that is developed in various ways—notably as both one in being (Deut. 6:4), yet also, mysteriously, three in persons (Matt. 28:19). If Scripture consistently portrays God as Creator of heaven and earth (Neh. 9:6; Is. 45:12; Jon. 1:9), from nothing (Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:3), merely by speaking (Ps. 33:6; 2 Pet. 3:5), and in the span of six days (Ex. 31:17; Heb. 4:4), then that, indeed, is how we are to understand the creation of the world. If Scripture consistently portrays God as forming man from the dust (Gen. 3:19; 1 Cor. 15:47–49), forming the woman subsequently from man's rib (1 Cor. 11:8; 1 Tim. 2:13), and creating both in His divine image (Gen. 9:6; Col. 3:10), then that is how we are to understand the origin of humanity.

To interpret Scripture in light of the rule of faith (principle 4) is unique to scriptural interpretation. It is, together with the fifth, sixth, and seventh principles, directly connected to what we have emphasized earlier about the role that knowing Christ and His justifying work—that is, the Gospel—plays in one's approach to Scripture. Martin Franzmann's work, cited above, beautifully lays out the importance of reading Scripture in light of the "rule of faith" (his preferred term is *res*, that is, its central message).²⁶⁹ He shows how throughout the Bible's historical books (Genesis to Esther), the great

²⁶⁹ Franzmann's concern is with what may be called the material principle of theology. The term indicates the central teaching of Christian faith, the Gospel. The material principle is coupled with the "formal principle," that is, Scripture—the form by which the Gospel message is given to us. This distinction and the importance of retaining these principles rightly is discussed at length in the CTCR's report, *Gospel and Scripture: The Interrelationship of the Material and Formal Principles in Lutheran Theology* (1972).

"melody line" (another expression akin to the rule of faith) is God's grace despite the rebellion, sin, failures, and brokenness of humanity in general and Israel in particular.²⁷⁰ The prophets make this "radical Gospel" all the more plain, portraying a corrupt and crushed nation nonetheless finding promised redemption in Israel's God.²⁷¹ And—of particular importance to this report—even as the Bible's "Wisdom Literature" (Job to Song of Songs) is emphatic in the value it gives to human wisdom and understanding (and we might add, science), it nonetheless reminds us that no such accomplishments "can avail," ultimately, and "the victory belongs to the Lord" and to Him alone.²⁷² Under this same principle, the rule of faith, we would also mention the role the ecumenical Creeds play as shorthand forms of the central biblical truth of who the one God is—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and what He has done in creating the world, redeeming it from sin and death, and purifying and renewing His people. It is in Christ, then, that the New Testament fulfills all of this utterly gracious, justifying, redeeming work of God for Israel and the nations.²⁷³

From this, both the fifth principle (*interpretation in view of Christ*) and the sixth (*distinguish Law and Gospel, sin and grace*) from Burgland's list are immediately obvious. We have amply addressed the fifth principle above. As we have noted, Christ stands at the center, for "he is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17)—including, of course, the Scriptures and their message. All sound exegesis must begin and ever return to Christ Jesus, the revelation of God (Matt. 11:27).

Moreover, regarding the sixth principle, it is certain that only in Christ does humanity's failure to keep God's law, and all human sin and rebellion, find an answer in the Gospel—the Good News of Christ's gracious, redeeming death and resurrection. To read Scripture with careful distinction between Law and Gospel, sin and grace, is to recognize that Jesus stands at the center of Scripture because of His saving work. It is also to recognize that the means by which the Holy Spirit does His renewing and sanctifying work is the Word of God itself, which first makes plain human sin and God's righteous condemnation and threatened punishment (Law), but then so beautifully also declares us righteous because of the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord (Gospel). Bohlmann has summarized this principle, reminding us that a person who has been justified by grace through faith in Christ "knows that in Holy Scripture God speaks a condemnatory word (Law) and a forgiving word (Gospel), the former for the sake of the latter."²⁷⁴ The Apology of the Augsburg Confession explains:

²⁷⁰ Franzmann, *Seven Theses*, 6–7.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 8, quoting Prov. 21:30–31.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

²⁷⁴ Bohlmann, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, 65.

For these are the two chief works of God in human beings, to terrify and to justify the terrified or make them alive. The entire Scripture is divided into these two works. One part is the law, which reveals, denounces, and condemns sin. The second part is the gospel, that is, the promise of grace given in Christ.²⁷⁵

This twin message is part and parcel of the central truth of Scripture—it is "constantly repeated" in a variety of ways throughout Scripture in its entirety.²⁷⁶

The seventh principle, *attending to the meaning "then and there" and also the meaning "here and now,"* is a caution against superficial readings of Scripture. One might assume from the first few principles, especially the second, that the Bible is always easy to understand. But that would be to ignore the fact that the Bible was written millennia ago in a world far different from our own. Its truths, intended for the whole of humanity, were revealed within particular human circumstances, in specific times and places. So ordinary Bible readers can and should give thanks that God has called for His Church to set aside servants—pastors and teachers in particular—who are "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:2, 24) because they have studied God's Word deeply, learning the languages of its original authors and the customs, practices, and idiosyncrasies of that particular world from long ago. It is by carefully understanding the "then and there" language, setting, and meaning that we are able best to speak of the "here and now" meaning of the Bible. In attending to this principle the Bible reader will understand, to use a simple example, that while the commandments forbid coveting our neighbor's "male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey," they by no means exempt our coveting of status, cars, and so forth.²⁷⁷

4. Biblical Exegesis and Modern Science

For our purposes here, the important question is to understand how proper biblical exegesis relates with the discoveries, models and theories of science. Has the Bible been discredited because it sometimes appears to be in conflict with knowledge gleaned from science?

As we have seen in the preceding sections, God does not reveal Himself in some eternal language of heaven, which doubtless we, as finite, fallen

²⁷⁵ Ap XII, 53.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ Exodus 20:17. This is not the place to investigate fully the prerequisite knowledge and skill of the Biblical reader. Knowledge of language and linguistics, of history and culture, of theology and rhetoric, all contribute to the successful carrying out of the exegetical task. What is important to mention here is that this training and formation does not happen in isolation from other readers. Readers are formed by communities that have themselves already assumed the role of reader and interpreter of the text in question. A helpful discussion of this is found in Voelz, 220–221.

creatures, could not understand. Rather, He reveals Himself through human language that is shaped by the world as it appears to human beings. This is very clearly illustrated by Jesus' frequent assertion that "The kingdom of heaven is like . . ." (for example, in Matt. 13). The Scriptures generally describe the world according to what philosopher Wilfrid Sellars (1912–1989) called its "manifest image"²⁷⁸—the way it *appears* to us using our five senses and according to our given, common-sense reactions to it. Even when it recounts the marvelous and transcendent (such as in reports of miracles and the events of visionary and apocalyptic literature) it provides images that are sense perceptible. Even as God communicated most profoundly to human beings by becoming man in the person of Jesus Christ, so also He inspired fallible human beings to communicate infallibly His truth as it was spoken by prophets and apostles and preserved infallibly in the inerrant Scriptures.

A consequence of God's communication to humans by way of the manifest image is that scriptural texts of apparent scientific import should not be reinterpreted in light of current, highly specialized, scientific theories, but should be taken as accurate reports of the way things appear to sensory human beings. Thus in the famous example of Joshua 10:12–13 (discussed at length in chapter 1), we should limit our interpretation of the text to the claim that, from an earthbound perspective, the sun *appeared* to stand still. This is doubtless compatible with a variety of scientific interpretations,²⁷⁹ but none of these can claim to be derived from text itself. This is because the Holy Spirit inspired the writers to use human words whose original meanings had not been shaped by these scientific theories. For scientifically literate people today, talk of a stationary sun has been shaped by these theoretical advances, but it would be an anachronistic equivocation to read our meaning back into the ancient writings themselves. This is why inerrancy is not "negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision," or by "observational descriptions of nature," or, as another example, by the use of "round numbers."²⁸⁰ Carl Henry nicely explains this point:

Inerrancy does not imply that modern technological precision in reporting statistics and measurements, that conformity to modern historiographic method in reporting genealogies and other historical data, or that modern scientific method in reporting cosmological matters, can be expected from the biblical writers We have no right to impose upon the biblical

²⁷⁸ Wilfrid Sellars, "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man," in ed. Robert Colodny, *Frontiers of Science and Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962): 35–78.

²⁷⁹ For some of the possibilities here, see Robert Dick Wilson's "Understanding 'The Sun Stood Still,'" in ed. Walter Kaiser, *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 61–65. A controversial feature of this essay's orientation is that the author seems very concerned to avoid a miraculous interpretation of Joshua 10.

²⁸⁰ "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" Article XIII. Available at: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>.

writers methods of classifying information that are specifically oriented to the scientific interests of our time, or to require their use of scientifically technical language, or to demand the computerized precision cherished by a technological civilization.²⁸¹

This should warn us also against perhaps overly zealous scientifically minded apologetic arguments that claim to have discovered that the Scriptures anticipated or give direct insight into such things as relativity theory, quantum mechanics, or dark matter. The text is indeed inspired, but what was inspired were human words whose meanings are to be found in their normal usage at the time the original autographs were written—and that usage was not shaped by any of these scientific theories.

We would do well also to examine several assumptions which may lead to false or inaccurate conclusions regarding the claims of Scripture and of science. Certain questions may be beneficial when biblical statements and scientific conclusions seem incompatible.

Are we talking about the same thing?

In order for two statements to conflict, they must be speaking about the same subject, and one statement must affirm what the other denies about that subject. If one person says “apples are green or red,” and another says “oranges are orange,” the claims do not conflict because they have a different subject matter. Likewise, there is no conflict if someone says “oranges are orange” and another says “oranges contain Vitamin C,” because neither person denies what the other person affirms. However, if one person claims that oranges contain Vitamin C and the other person claims that oranges do not contain Vitamin C, then there is a conflict. Conflict requires that there are two assertions about the same subject (oranges), that both use terms with the same meaning (“oranges,” “contain,” “Vitamin C”) to describe it, and that these terms are used both to affirm and deny the very same claim about the subject.²⁸²

If both parties are competent users of the same language and employ standard contemporary usage, the meaning of terms is usually straightforward.²⁸³ Matters are not so easy when comparing contemporary scientific

²⁸¹ Carl F. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 4, *God Who Speaks and Shows* (Waco, TX: Word, 1979), 201.

²⁸² This principle is specifically applied to the alleged discrepancies regarding the Gospels’ accounts of the healing of the blind at Jericho and the accounts of Matthew and Luke in Acts of the death of Judas in William Arndt, *Bible Difficulties & Seeming Contradictions*, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1987), 178–179, 184.

²⁸³ One should not assume, of course—even for competent users of the same language, that meanings are always straightforward, since individuals often use the same term with differing emphases or nuances. Logicians call attention to the *fallacy of equivocation*, where the same term is used with two (or more) different meanings. For example, if one says a car is hot, another might misunderstand this to mean the car was stolen when the intended meaning was that car had a high temperature.

claims to ancient biblical texts. Even in those cases when, according to our established usage, a biblical text seems to comment on a scientific matter, we must remember that the original, intended meaning of the biblical text generally reflects *the usage of language “then and there”*²⁸⁴ and that usage was not shaped by the claims, procedures, theories and findings of modern science. Without this caution, there is a very serious danger of anachronism, which will read the contemporary meanings of words within science back into an ancient text. For example, when Genesis speaks of God creating plants, trees, and land creatures according to their *kind*, it cannot automatically be assumed that “kind” lines up neatly with the taxonomical categories recognized by modern biology. “God did not classify animals thousands of years ago according to our modern classification system.”²⁸⁵

Similarly, it is not easy to determine the identity of the marine animal that swallowed Jonah (Jon. 1:17; Matt. 12:40), as the words used in the original languages (*dag gadol*, “fish” in Hebrew; *ketos*, “sea monster” in Greek) are simply generic terms and are not specific.²⁸⁶ While observations of the flora, fauna, archeology, hydrology, psychology, and sociology of a people may provide insights that help to clarify what these texts are saying, the exegete must resist reading the contemporary categories of modern scientific taxonomy back into the scriptural text, but should instead try to recognize the actual conceptual categories in use at the time of the text’s composition.

Who is the audience?

With reference to the audience of Scripture, there is the matter of reconciling the particular with the universal. Scripture reflects the seeming paradox that there is both an original audience of a text and also a universal audience, since God’s Word has a catholic or universal application for all humanity.²⁸⁷ Despite the historical particularities of its formulations, all of God’s Word is intended for all people at all times. Its purpose is eternal or eschatological, not temporal, so its direction is from the particularities of this world to the world God has promised and has already inaugurated in Christ Jesus.

²⁸⁴ See principle 7, pp. 107–111. One may also note, however, that God in His omniscience may mean more than the inspired human author himself understood. This is sometimes referred to as a *sensus plenior*. So, for example, our Lord says all of the Old Testament testifies of Him (Luke 24:44–47), even though that testimony is frequently indirect, not direct.

²⁸⁵ See Eric Lyons, “Was Jonah Swallowed by a Fish or a Whale?” available at: <http://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=6&article=2830>.

²⁸⁶ See *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., Frederick William Danker, ed. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000); 544; and Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 5 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1:213. For a more general response to alleged biological errors in the Bible, see Eric Lyons, “Did the Bible Writers Commit Biological Blunders,” available at: <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=615&article=736>.

²⁸⁷ This also is a direct application of principle 7, p. 111 above. In addition, it is an aspect of principles 1 and 2, pp. 108–109. The term catholicity is used here with reference to the universal dimension of all Christian truth and thus the church herself and the Scriptures.

Since the original texts of Scripture are in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, they must be studied in light of their original language and setting.²⁸⁸ Our Lord Jesus lived within a particular geographic locale, ate the foods of that particular region, spoke the language of that place, wore the garments of that time, and generally experienced the total panoply of cultural expressions of that day. Nevertheless, His life and the truths He spoke are for all time. This becomes explicit in His command to preach His Gospel to all nations (Matt. 28:19–20). It is all the more apparent because of the remarkable fact that His life and words were preserved not in the language He spoke (Aramaic) nor in the language of the Hebrew Scriptures that He read and fulfilled, but in the language of the surrounding first century world—Greek. The record of the profoundly particular life, death, resurrection, and teachings of this first century Jew has thus, from the beginning, been translated into one language after another. As it is heard in their own tongue by one more far-off people after another, faith arises (Rom. 10:17) in the one Lord Jesus and His Gospel—in the one God of all people, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.²⁸⁹

This also means that every hearing of Scripture requires attention to cultural details that may be “foreign.” For example, the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:12–24) includes details that are alien to an American today—reclining at a table, yokes of oxen—yet it shows us eternal truths about fallen mankind and the love and grace of God. It shows us that all fallen people are blind, lame beggars, weak and handicapped with no power to save themselves, and it shows that God’s saving grace is offered to all. Science works in a different direction. Its purpose is temporal, not eternal. Science explores how this world works. Its goals are ultimately practical in terms of this world. To the extent that science discovers enduring principles or truths, it seeks thereby to apply them to present problems and difficulties, not eternal ones.

On rare occasions, the particularity and even peculiarity of Scripture’s language and imagery may mean we cannot be sure of some specific details about a text. An example is the meaning of the “star of Bethlehem.” Matthew 2:1–9 tells us of a “star in the East” that guides the wise men to the birthplace of Christ, and scholars have puzzled over just what this “star” refers to. Most important is that we cannot assume that “star” means what it does in modern astronomical theory, which carefully distinguishes between planets, comets and stars. The Greek word for “star” used in Matthew is “*aster*.” This

²⁸⁸ One corollary principle of biblical inspiration is that the original autographs of Scripture were inspired in their particular languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) with a meaning determined by the usage of words in their world. Thus it is important not only to attempt to reconstruct the original text from the comparison of extant manuscripts, but also to labor to understand what that text originally meant in the minds of its authors and intended recipients.

²⁸⁹ For a profound and provocative consideration of the importance of the translation of the Scriptures, see Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).

can signify any luminous body, so it does not distinguish between planets, comets, and what we today call stars. Thus it is not surprising that modern commentators have proposed theories along each of these lines (and more besides).²⁹⁰ In favor of the planetary theory is that there was a conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars in 6 BC, but it is doubtful it would have looked like a single heavenly body, if indeed it was fully visible at all.²⁹¹ There is some plausibility in the ideas of a comet or even of a nova which occurs when a star has a sudden increase in its luminosity because of an internal explosion.²⁹² Yet the text does not tell us whether the “star” was a natural phenomenon (it certainly could have been, since God knows from eternity when some unusual natural phenomenon will occur, and can certainly use it as a sign) or a special miracle. Some think clues in the text suggest the latter option, for how can an ordinary star go before people and rest at a particular location? But others point out that this may just refer to the apparent motion of the star, since “as people travel, the stars do seem to move with them or before them, stopping when they stop.”²⁹³ The point of the emphasis here is that inerrancy does not imply that we always *know* what every detail of the original text means, it only implies that the original meaning expresses truth. What we can say with confidence is that the mysterious star is an extraordinary illustration of the fact that God desires all to know His Son as Lord and King—including those from faraway and once hostile lands (Eph. 2:17; 1 Tim. 2:4).

Are we speaking in similar ways?

There are also subtle matters of genre identification. The genre of a text concerns the particular class of literature that text belongs to by virtue of its form, content, style, and technique. A variety of genres is employed in Scripture, such as historical narrative, regulations and laws, prophecies, psalms, poetry, and so forth. If faulty exegesis is to be avoided, identification of the genre of the text must be grounded in the text itself. Poetic or metaphorical expressions may then be identified as such without implying a literal meaning (for example, in Psalm 104:3 the Lord is said to make the clouds His chariot). Thus, parallels with similar texts and literary conventions of the time can be illuminating; however, they are not conclusive as to a biblical text’s meaning.²⁹⁴ Moreover, judgment about the genre of a biblical text can

²⁹⁰ See chapter 7 of Paul Maier’s *In the Fullness of Time: A Historian Looks at Christmas, Easter, and the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1991).

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 59–60.

²⁹⁴ This principle does not deny that parallel texts outside of Scripture can help to illuminate the genre of a biblical text. For example, many scholars have argued persuasively that the Mosaic covenant as expressed in Exodus and Deuteronomy has many of the same structural elements as does a typical Suzerain-Vassal treaty of the ancient near east such as those employed by the Hittites. The Biblical texts follow a structure similar to the suzerainty treaties, with a preamble, historical prologue, list of stipulations, and an associated list of blessings for obedi-

not be based on whether the text seems plausible in light of modern scientific claims.²⁹⁵ Thus, one cannot suppose that the creation of the world by the spoken Word of God is a poetic metaphor without any literal basis because it seems to conflict with a modern scientific claim about the origins of the earth. This is an irresponsible interpretation because it does not establish the genre of the text on the basis of the form, content, style, and technique of the text itself, but rather suggests a convenient literary escape route from an apparent scientific embarrassment.

When Psalm 98:8 expresses this response—"Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together"—no one supposes this is a scientific prediction of some rather unusual behavior by rivers and hills. Yet it should be noticed that the text itself makes it abundantly clear that this is a praise song (v. 1, 5, 6). There are other clues as well, such as Hebrew parallelisms within Psalm 98 and within the surrounding context of similar psalms, such as musical directions which indicate that this is a species of poetry (a song of praise) in which metaphor and figures of speech are to be expected. On the other hand, it would be far different to claim that Jesus' miracles of healing are only metaphorical, especially when Jesus himself instructs John the Baptist's disciples to tell John about the miracles that they "hear and see" (Matt. 11: 4). What they heard about and saw with their own eyes were healings of the blind, the lame, the diseased, and the deaf, not inspiring metaphors for something else. There is nothing in the texts that report these miracles to suggest that they are metaphorical or mythological, so any suggestion along those lines derives primarily from assumptions external to the text (e.g., naturalism).

A well-known illustration of erroneous genre identification is the attempt to show that Genesis 1 is a mythological text, because of its superficial resemblance to the ancient Babylonian creation myth, *Enuma Elish*.²⁹⁶ Close study of the texts in parallel reveals major differences.²⁹⁷ For example, *Enuma*

enue and curses for breach of covenant. That discovery can help us to see that God's covenant with his people takes the form of a recognized legal agreement and serves both religious and civil purposes. However, it does not follow from such formal similarities that the content of the biblical covenant is simply borrowed or merely a human political document that adapts existing legislation. The kind of agreement God is making with His people—a matter that depends in part on determining the genre of the text (e.g., what sort of contract or treaty is it, and what are its terms?)—can be discerned only by a close reading of its own claims. That meaning should make sense in light of the ancient near east context, but we should not presume it is merely borrowed. Recognition of the merits of the text itself reveals that the Mosaic covenant is quite unique in its content.

²⁹⁵ See principles 1 and 2, p. 107–109.

²⁹⁶ The full text of the *Enuma Elish* is available here: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/stc/index.htm>. See also the one-page summary chart in John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978, 1994), 80.

²⁹⁷ An excellent summary of the superficial similarities and major underlying differences is provided by Jared Wellman, "Does the Genesis creation account come from the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*?" available at <http://carm.org/genesis-creation-enuma-elish>.

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those words, they cannot add, delete, or modify the words themselves or their meaning. If they could, Scripture would simply become "a wax nose to be pulled to and fro"³⁰⁰ and adapted to say whatever we would prefer it to mean. What was reasonable to the autonomous individual, rather than the text itself, would determine the text's "meaning" and Scripture's divine Author and His authority would be ignored.

On matters of scientific import, then, the implication is that we should not simply read contemporary science into the original text. For example, in describing the creation of the world, there is no reason to think that, even under inspiration, Moses had in mind some modern cosmological theory that modern scientists regard as plausible. Nothing in the text suggests that Moses was an early advocate of modern string theory or speculated about multiple universes! At the same time, one should be careful to note that the scriptural text may not clearly and directly rule out all such theories. On the one hand, it is possible that the text is simply silent on some matters as they were simply not on the radar (to use an anachronistic metaphor!) when the text was written. On the other hand, the plain sense of Genesis 1:1 ("In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth") and Matthew 24:35 ("Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away") is surely incompatible with the view held in common by Ancient Greek philosophers³⁰¹ and "steady state" cosmologists (like Sir James Jeans in the 1920s³⁰²) that the existence of matter has neither a beginning nor an end.

Areas of uncertainty: humility in interpretation and confidence in Christ

Of course, while we rightly confess the conviction that Scripture is infallible, we also recognize that its interpreters are not. So it may happen that further study makes orthodox interpreters question assumptions or conclusions about a biblical text and its relationship to scientific knowledge. The case of Copernicus is an example. Nevertheless, faithful scholars should be on guard against fundamental re-readings of texts (for example, reading the creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2 as mere mythology), and scientifically minded people may have to simply accept that when God's Word meets the works of human science, we cannot always produce a tidy rapprochement.

³⁰⁰ This was Luther's charge against some of the theologians of Rome in his day. See Luther's "The Papacy at Rome: An Answer to the Celebrated Romanist at Leipzig," (1520). AE 39:81.

³⁰¹ Plato and Aristotle both took for granted that matter had always been here, and assumed that what required explanation was not the existence of matter (a brute fact) but its structure or form. Thus in Plato's *Timaeus*, matter is shaped into the likeness of the eternal forms, and in Aristotelian metaphysics, formal causes explained their structure.

³⁰² The steady state theory hypothesizes that there is a continuous creation of new matter, so that the universe has no origin or termination. This theory is widely rejected because of the overwhelming evidence that the universe came into existence a finite time ago.

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Elish is polytheistic, not monotheistic; the gods themselves seem subject to powers of nature (indeed they seem to be part of nature, and are mortal); and it is not an account of the creation of the entire universe from nothing; the patron deity Marduk creates the heavens and the earth by dividing the body of Tiamat, another god he has slain (Tablet 4), and Ea fashions human beings from the blood of Kingu (Tablet 6). It is a fallacy of faulty analogy to argue that because two texts have some superficial similarities and one text belongs to a particular genre, that therefore the other text shares that genre. By this argument, realistic novels could be declared non-fiction and the moving account of an actual trial could be declared fiction. Even if it is true that some images or ideas are common to the *Enuma Elish* and Genesis, the fact remains that Genesis makes unique claims about the Creator and the creation—most notably that Yahweh is the one true God, that He transcends his creation (and is not part of it or subject to it), and that He alone brings all else into being.

By whose authority are we speaking?

In each of the foregoing examples there is an improper reading of the biblical text, resulting in something other than its intended meaning. However, there is also a fundamentally different understanding of authority, as we indicated in section 2. Does final authority lie with the Word of God or the claims of science? This challenge to biblical authority is no surprise because, with the rise of autonomous reason, all forms of authority have been challenged. As Carl Henry said several decades ago,

Anyone who thinks that this problem specially or exclusively embarrasses Bible believers has not listened to the wild winds of defiance now sweeping over much of modern life. Respect for authority is being challenged on almost every front and in almost every form.²⁹⁸

A contemporary example of this is the undermining of the Bible's moral authority. In recent years some theologians have claimed that Romans 1:26–27 does not really speak against sexual activity between persons of the same sex, but is rather focused on more specific abuses such as temple prostitution or pedophilia—that this is what the writers actually had in mind.²⁹⁹ What drives this argument, however, is the presupposition of contemporary social science that homosexuality is one among many natural orientations and that therefore this cannot be what Paul is opposing. The trouble is that this conclusion cannot be derived from the words of the text: these words neither mention nor suggest temple prostitution, pedophilia, or any other such qualifications. Sound exegesis requires that we draw the meaning out of the words actually in the text. While contextual studies can help us to understand the meaning of

²⁹⁸ Carl F. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 4., 7–8.

²⁹⁹ For an example of this and a response to it within Lutheranism see the CTCR report, *Response to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, online at <http://lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=1820>.

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As we have shown, the Bible cannot be isolated from science—the two cannot simply be segregated from one another. Contrary to NOMA's central tenet, biblical truths *do overlap* with scientific ones. It is important to emphasize, however, that the overlap is not comprehensive. The Bible does not speak directly to many different topics and situations that science addresses. Scripture is not an encyclopedia of all human knowledge, but it is the inspired record of God's particular work in history—especially the incarnation and saving work of His Son. The salvific purpose of Scripture is central, not microbiology or agronomy or physics or other human scientific disciplines. Scripture does not contain comprehensive truths about such sciences and it is a misuse of Scripture to think the Bible will give us clarity about scientific questions that it does not answer or even intend to address.

Scripture is very clear, first and foremost, about its central and primary truth: Christ and His saving work. Theologians often refer to the clarity of Scripture as its "perspicuity." Francis Pieper asserts: "According to Scripture, the perspicuity of Scripture consists in this, that it presents, in language that can be understood by all, whatever men must know to be saved."³⁰³ The Gospel, of course, is not the only truth that Scripture clearly teaches. Pieper goes on to say that "Scripture is perfectly clear and is in regard to doctrine and life 'a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.'³⁰⁴ Thus, every aspect of Christian teaching ("doctrine and life") is made clear in Scripture. Reminding us of the consistency of this idea and its importance in Lutheran theology (as is evident in its Confessions) the CTCR report on *Gospel and Scripture* states:

The whole body of Lutheran doctrine is always represented as "taken from the Word of God and solidly and well grounded therein" (FC SD Summary, 5) "supported with clear and irrefutable testimonies from the Holy Scriptures" (*ibid.*, 6), and based "on the witness of the unalterable truth of the divine Word" (Preface to *The Book of Concord*, p. 5).³⁰⁵

The Bible makes perfectly clear that God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Furthermore, we can be confident that an omnipotent, omniscient, and holy God will be clear in His revelation of all that we must know to be saved and to live according to God's good and gracious will. Indeed, God Himself tells us that His Word cannot fail:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout,

³⁰³ *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 320. Pieper has a lengthy section on this doctrine on 319–329.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 324. See also Bohlmann, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, 53–63.

³⁰⁵ *Gospel and Scripture*, 9.

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giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Is. 55:10–11)

And toward the end of John's Gospel, we are clearly told its primary purpose:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30–31)

As Christians, we can know with certainty that God has revealed His plan of salvation to us, and more generally, that even if we struggle with some difficult passages here and there, we can be confident that "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). This passage tells us that the Scriptures are sufficiently clear for effective instruction in *all areas of the Christian life and teaching*. If this were not so, the Church would be unable to carry out the Great Commission of making "disciples of all nations" and "teaching them to observe all" that Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:19–20, emphasis added).

The Bible is clear about those doctrines essential to salvation and Christian living. This means that if there is a text that expresses a doctrinal truth in a way that is less than clear to us, we can be sure that it is also expressed more clearly in some other passage of Scripture. And since Scripture interprets Scripture, we can and should consult these clearer passages to aid in illuminating the meaning of those that are less clear.

It must again be stressed that clarity in "doctrine and life" or "salvation and Christian living" should not be misunderstood as meaning that the Bible clearly teaches *only* spiritual or moral truths. Scripture clearly reveals truths about God's world and the history of His saving work that are "historical" and "scientific" even when they tell about what God did in extraordinary and miraculous ways.³⁰⁶ In His Word the Triune God reveals Himself to be a God who is fully involved with creation—both in its initial perfection and in its fallen present state. His work of redemption involves His being flesh and blood and His mysterious work of spiritual renewal involves vocal chords, sound waves, and dirty feet that carry a preacher from one place to the next

³⁰⁶ The terms "historical" and "scientific" are employed here to indicate factuality. Thus, an event, such as the Exodus from Egypt, must be understood as historically factual because Scripture speaks clearly about its occurrence. So also, an event, such as the raising of Lazarus must be understood as factual in that a scientifically minded physician could have observed and documented first the fact of Lazarus's death and then of his return to life.

(Rom. 10:14–15). In his discussion of the principle of scriptural clarity in the Lutheran confessions, Ralph Bohlmann writes:

We note that all articles of faith, the sacraments, and Old Testament sacrifices are included within the compass of Biblical clarity. Moreover, the clarity of Scripture is clearly related to Biblical language. It is therefore not in keeping with the confessional understanding of the clarity of Scripture to limit it primarily to those passages "which display the teaching of justification by grace through faith in all its force and glory."³⁰⁷

We can also be certain that the power of Scripture is not limited by what we find easy to understand. We know that the efficacy of Baptism comes from God's Word, even though the infant does not understand that Word. The power of the Word does not depend on our ability to respond, as if the Word was inert and our minds were the determining factor. Rather, the Word of God is alive and active (Heb. 4:12). It was through the Word of God that the universe was created (Ps. 33:6; Heb. 11:3), and it is through the Word that those dead in sin are brought to new life in Christ (1 Pet. 1:23). It is also through the Word that the Holy Spirit seeks to bring us to the inner clarity of faith that accepts such clear truths even when our minds cannot fully comprehend them.³⁰⁸

Still, there are areas of uncertainty. God has not revealed everything to us in His Word (Eccl. 3:11; 1 Cor. 13:9–12; John 21:25). Furthermore, we have seen that there are passages the exact meaning of which is a matter of ongoing scholarly debate. It is particularly unwise to attempt to "prove" or "disprove" the veracity of Scripture by importing modern, scientific meanings—which are foreign to the text—into the interpretation of Scripture passages. This amounts to a rejection of *sola scriptura*: assumptions outside the Bible are used magisterially to support or reject its content.

A wiser course is to admit that in some cases we do not know the best interpretation of a passage. In other cases, the sense of a passage may be clear, but there is no clear way of *integrating* a claim of Scripture with the claims of

³⁰⁷ *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, 59.

³⁰⁸ So Luther distinguishes the inner clarity of faith and the external clarity of Scripture's words. The unbeliever understands the clear assertion of Scripture that God created the heavens and the earth, but rejects it as false because the inner clarity that comes through faith in God is lacking. Pieper quotes Luther as follows: "If you speak of the inner clearness, no man sees one iota in the Scriptures but he that hath the Spirit of God. All have a darkened heart, so that, even if they know how to speak of, and set forth, all things in the Scripture, yet they cannot feel them or know them; nor do they believe that they are the creatures of God or anything else, according to Psalms 14:1: 'The fool hath said in his heart, God is nothing.' For the Spirit is required to understand the whole of the Scripture and every part of it. If you speak of the external clearness, nothing whatever is left obscure or ambiguous; but all things that are in the Scriptures are by the Word brought forth into the clearest light and proclaimed to the whole world." Pieper, 325. The Luther quotation is from the St. Louis edition, XVIII:1683f. See also Bohlmann, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, 59–63.

modern science. In such situations, we must simply do our best to offer an interpretation of the passage or an explanation of the tension between a scriptural claim and the claims of science, acknowledging that such interpretations and explanations are tentative, yet always showing the extent to which they are grounded in the text itself, which is reliable.

In this, Luther's treatment of certain passages can serve as a helpful model of interpretive and intellectual humility paired with a confidence in Christ which sets His Word above human reason. The following extended citation from John Maxfield's book, *Luther's Lectures on Genesis and the Formation of Evangelical Identity*, summarizes this point well:

In practice, Luther's belief that the Holy Spirit had spoken in the text of scripture as recorded by Moses led him to reject any stepping away from the text as written, even when it involved contradicting the witness of the church fathers or of reason. For example, when Luther rejected patristic allegorical or figurative interpretations regarding the days of creation in Genesis 1, he concluded his argument by stating, 'If we do not comprehend the reason for this, let us remain pupils and leave the magisterium to the Holy Spirit.' [AE 1:5] Likewise on the issue of the cosmology espoused by the opening chapters of Genesis: 'Moses says with clear words that the waters are above and below the firmament. For this reason I take captive here my understanding and agree with the word even if I do not comprehend it.' [AE 1:26]

Luther's adherence to the clear words of Moses in the text of Genesis is reflected also in what appears to be a most banal genealogical table, namely, the genealogy at the end of chapter 10. The professor told his students that this chapter should be esteemed as 'a mirror in which is seen what we human beings are, namely, creatures so deformed by sin that we do not know our own origin—no, not even God himself, our maker—unless the word of God reveals these (as it were) glimmers of divine light to us from afar.' [AE 2:208–209]³⁰⁹

Indeed, we should not expect a final synthesis of the ultimate and the penultimate. Efforts in that direction tend either to absolutize the relative (giving a preferred scientific theory the status of Scripture) or to relativize the absolute (reducing Scripture to the level of one among many competing "theories"). It is far more honest and faithful to both the goals and purposes of Scripture and science to accept that we must sometimes live with unresolved tensions, knowing that ultimately our confidence and hope lie not in our perfect knowledge but in Christ. Such areas of tension and temporary uncer-

³⁰⁹ *Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies* 80 (Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2008), 34.

tainty are no threat to one who knows "the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge" and so is "filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19).

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have attempted to situate the discussion about the proper way to understand the claims of Scripture and science by considering the nature of sound biblical exegesis and its implication for scriptural texts of scientific import. We have emphasized the vital importance of defending the inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture, and we have argued that Scripture is clear in all of its teachings concerning salvation and the Christian life, even if the exact meaning of certain specific texts may be a matter of scholarly dispute. We have discouraged any attempt to use science as a normative standard to either support or correct Scripture. Scripture alone is the ultimate source and norm for all teaching, and the proper role of science, as of reason in general, is to serve as a minister to the faith. It may help us to apply scriptural teaching and, in some cases, it may help us understand what Scripture is saying, but it should never simply be read into the Bible anachronistically. Rather we must follow the often arduous path of humbling ourselves to the original intended meaning of the text. This is where we meet the Christ about whom all the Scriptures testify, and this is where we find our life and salvation.

Chapter V

Practical Applications

1. Introduction

Science provides both opportunities and challenges for thoughtful Christians in a variety of vocations. How should *students* respond to being taught a theory in apparent tension with their faith? How should *teachers* present a controversial scientific idea? How should *scientific investigators* understand their responsibilities? And how should *non-scientific laity* respond to the claims made on behalf of the scientific community by the media and popular books and articles? In this chapter, we will begin to address these questions by discussing how each of these vocational groups might handle some representative (and in some cases, intentionally provocative) examples. In the process, some general principles and rules of thumb will be offered to guide Christian reflection. This chapter does not attempt to speak definitively, but rather encourages an ongoing and constructive discussion in Bible classes and other Christian education venues.³¹⁰ It is particularly helpful if the discussion includes both theologically and scientifically trained individuals.³¹¹

2. Students

A common enough experience for Christian students in high school and college is to be presented with a scientific theory that appears to conflict with their faith. Probably the most common examples derive from evolutionary claims about the origin and diversity of life, for example the assertions that life arose from non-life via undirected natural processes (chemical evolution),

³¹⁰ Specialized Bible classes on the scientific vocation would be one starting point. See, for example, Robert Weisz, *Playing God* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002); Adam Francisco and Jesse Yow, *Off the Edge: Faith, Science, and the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003); and Angus Menzies, *Science and the Savior: The Calling of a Scientist* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004).

³¹¹ It is unfortunate that advanced scientific training has become highly secularized, and Christian science educators and professionals are often not provided classes in the history, philosophy, and theology of science. While some do compensate for this by significant outside reading, the ideal solution is for the church and its universities to provide resources (books, websites, conferences, seminars, etc.) to assist Christian scientists in these areas, allowing them a safe place to think through the intersection of their faith and their scientific work. For this same reason, faith and science classes in Christian high schools and colleges, presentations and discussions at national youth group meetings, district and circuit level pastoral convocations, and conferences for Christian scientific educators and professionals would all be beneficial ways to foster healthy interaction. A book that attempts to model such interaction between scientists, theologians, and historians and philosophers of science is Menzies, *Reading God's World*. One of the most accessible integrations of the history, philosophy, and theology of science is Pearcey and Thaxton's *The Soul of Science*.

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and that all of the diversity in the body plans of various creatures derives from descent with modification from a common ancestor via natural selection (so-called macro-evolution). Both in textbooks and in the presentation of many instructors, the impression is given that this is something nature did all by itself, and that, while the student may choose to believe in God, He can have nothing to do with the scientific explanation of the origin and diversity of life.

Unsurprisingly, but unfortunately, many students react to such claims in a number of unhelpful ways that reflect the inadequate solutions to the question of how Christ relates to culture, an issue discussed in chapter 1 of this report. They may come to see science as simply a threat to their faith, as a rival religion or ideology, and thus as something that must be ignored or completely rejected (Christ against Culture). Or they may come to think that the faith must simply be modified so that it is compatible with what any widely accepted scientific theory claims (Christ of Culture). Or it may be thought that the faith must somehow be united with the science (Christ above Culture) or that Christians must improve on the science so that it properly reflects Christian truth (Christ the Transformer of Culture).

However, in one way or another, all of these approaches represent (or risk) a failure of Christian critical engagement. As Gene Edward Veith argues, there are more constructive ways for Christians to respond to problematic ideas, whether from the sciences or from other disciplines.³¹² Before responding in any way to a claim made on behalf of science, we should get some critical distance and ask some questions:

- (1) To what extent has a purely scientific theory or observation been combined with non-scientific ideologies or philosophical assumptions?
- (2) Can we distinguish and disentangle the science from the ideology and the philosophy, and if so, how much of our disagreement is primarily with the latter and not the former?
- (3) Even if we still think that the purely scientific claim is overstated and/or false, is there an element of truth in it?
- (4) Can we distinguish domains and applications where the claim is useful (and perhaps true) from others where it is more questionable (perhaps because it is untested, or even untestable, in those areas)?

By considering questions like these, a Christian student can achieve a good balance between several vocational objectives. Students are called into the world to serve their neighbor. One reason they should learn about the world's theories is that their neighbor will be exposed to them; such learning is therefore necessary to understanding the neighbor's thinking. We cannot

³¹² See Veith, "The University of Babylon," chapter 3 in his *Living God With All Your Mind*.

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talk to our neighbor about an issue we do not understand. If she sees evolutionary theory (for example) as a reason to reject God, the gentleness and respect required of Christian witnesses (1 Pet. 3:16) should motivate us to seek to understand the theory that has led to her rejection.

Christian students should also learn about these theories so that, by asking such questions as above, they begin to sift them and to separate out true and false, scientific and ideological, useful and speculative. They are called to be in the world, but not of it, so while learning about the world's ideas and theories, they should also maintain a healthy critical distance from them.

For example, Christian students of science can point out that it is simply not true that any scientific experiment demonstrates abiogenesis (the emergence of life from non-life), and they can note that the strongest evidence for evolutionary theory derives from examples of microevolution (e.g., increased resistance to antibiotics and pesticides). The case for macroevolution, on the other hand, is much more speculative, and not demonstrable by direct observations or experiments. They can also point out that the assumption that nature produces life and its diversity all by itself is fundamentally philosophical, not scientific: it reflects the philosophy of naturalism, according to which nature is an autonomous machine sufficient to account for anything which occurs within itself. Thus anyone who believes that the world was created by God, that God is providentially at work in the world, and that He intervenes in that world through special miracles, must reject this philosophical assumption.

That does not mean Christian students are, or should be, closed to all empirical investigation of the existence and diversity of life. A Christian scientist can develop models of the observable evidence without supposing that those models can settle all the philosophical questions about the ultimate origin and governance of the world. And if some scientists suggest that evidence points to the non-existence of God, there is no reason Christian scientists cannot dispute this, either by critiquing the limitations of that evidence, or by offering other evidence that points in the opposite direction. It is obviously unfair and ideologically biased to claim that scientific evidence can be used to support atheistic conclusions but cannot be used to support theistic ones. Apologetic arguments about science seem unsuited to provide "proof" in some ultimate sense, since science by its nature is a fallible study of a contingent universe. Such arguments are highly valuable, however, in showing that thoughtful Christians can make room for faith in a scientific world.

At the same time, within those domains for which evolutionary theory is useful (and perhaps true), such as understanding micro-evolutionary change in malaria or HIV, Christians intent on a medical career should certainly learn this information, as it may help them in treating patients or in fundamental lab research for more effective drugs and potential cures. Using some aspect of a theory that is helpful is not the same as endorsing all that the theory claims, or all that is claimed for it by proponents of ideologies and philoso-

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phies in tension with a Christian worldview. In these ways, a critical sifting of a scientific claim that rejects its non-scientific pretensions to ultimate truth and notes which parts of it are (and are not) supported by evidence, can be combined with a constructive use of the theory whenever it is demonstrably beneficial for the neighbor.

In this way, Christian students of science can balance two important objectives. They can remain faithful, refusing to make a scientific theory into an idol by giving it the ultimate allegiance owed to God alone. They can also develop an appropriate and authentically scientific attitude, one which both properly emphasizes the limits and fallibility of scientific understanding, while at the same time also thoroughly masters current scientific models and the best ways to use them to produce helpful results. There is no reason to choose between being a faithful Christian and developing an exemplary scientific attitude. If young Christians understand this, it will encourage more of them to pursue scientific vocations.

3. Teachers

For this reason, a critical goal for Christian science teachers must be to encourage their Christian students to see that they can pursue scientific careers without compromising their faith. Indeed, the Christian teacher has a responsibility to avoid imparting an anti-scientific perspective to students. Rather, the practical blessings that have accrued to humanity from science and scientists deserve emphasis from Christians because of the centrality of love for the neighbor in Christian theology.

Scientific advances in medicine are an obvious beginning point for the Christian teacher to encourage students toward scientific vocations. Science's steady progress against infectious diseases, infant and maternal mortality, disruption and disease of vital organs, and countless other human scourges and illnesses is so widespread, and its theoretical and technological advances have become so commonplace that we often fail to realize the enormity of their benefits. Moreover, the theological truth that we are saved through faith in Christ alone dare not lead us to disparage the importance of human intellect, research in science and other fields, and the growth of knowledge in general. Central aspects of the scientific method—for example, the importance of privileging evidence over assumptions and the value of critical, careful, objective research and thinking—are vital for every intellectual enterprise.

Rather than discouraging scientific careers and learning, teachers can model integration of faith and learning in their teaching. They can also adopt a pedagogical style that helps students to see how they can learn *about* a scientific claim or theory without either uncritically dismissing or uncritically embracing it. In the process, they will also model good educational practices that allow students to examine all sides of an issue, and avoid indoctrination

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so that students learn to think for themselves. Precisely because Christians have a place to stand outside of this world, they can be all the more objective in assessing the world's ideas. Standing on Christ and His Word, we do not need to make a scientific theory into a surrogate religion, nor do we have to dismiss it without a due consideration of its benefits for understanding God's world and serving our neighbor.

An exemplary approach here is for science teachers to present controversial ideas by way of *teaching the controversy* itself. That is, in addition to laying out an idea and its implications, students should be encouraged to learn the best arguments that can be given for and against it. This helps students to see that their options are not limited to blank acceptance or rejection of a scientific idea, but it also teaches good critical thinking. Religious and philosophical commitments will always shape our understandings of the world, a fact for which Christian students need not apologize and from which no student or scientist can escape. At the same time, all students, including Christians, will profit by developing the discipline of careful, honest, reasoned inquiry when assessing data and scholarly arguments.

In this way, teachers can assist students in combating erroneous and irrational claims about the authority of scientific ideas that derive from some highly questionable sources, such as the increasing politicization of science and the influence of non-scientific rhetoric in the popular science media. It is sometimes assumed that an idea should be accepted simply because it has been labeled "science"—for example, when we hear sweeping (and often contradictory) assertions that "science shows" what we should (and should not) eat and what is (and is not) good for our health. Science teachers should caution their students to investigate whether there is any supporting data for such claims, how strong it is, and whether there is other research pointing in the same or a different direction. More generally, they should remind their students that scientific claims to have established something with great certainty should, like other human claims, be considered carefully and examined critically.

In presenting a controversial issue—for example, climate change—an exemplary approach is to include the best arguments on all sides of the controversy. Students should be acquainted with the various reports of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). They should also be aware of some of criticisms of the claims made by the IPCC and other scientists who accept anthropogenic climate change.³¹³ It may also be helpful for students to consider the practical implications of the debate,

³¹³ The 2014 report of the IPCC is available at: <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg2/>. There is also significant literature by scientists who are unconvinced by the claims of the IPCC and others. For example, see Lawrence Solomon's *The Deniers*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Richard Vigilante Books, 2010). It is important to note that science, like other academic pursuits, including theology, is often motivated and influenced not only by the pursuit of truth but also by questions of funding, political trends, pressure from peers, and other factors.

tists conceived of their work in previous centuries. Even more vital is the need to recapture the idea that the Bible deeply affirms science as a God-pleasing contribution to our primary vocation of stewardship, and to encourage scientists to delight in their work as they read God's book of nature. As we have seen throughout this report, there are many reasons why thoughtful Christians should want to pursue science as means of glorifying God and serving their neighbor. The eminently practical nature of most scientific work is worth emphasizing. On a daily basis scientists and scientific discoveries help sick people to recover, provide comfort and relief from pain, facilitate healthy and abundant food production, contribute to functional and comfortable living and working spaces, enable speedy and safe transportation, identify criminals (while exonerating others), explore mysteries of space and time—and countless other examples of human betterment. These scientific advances are not simply of technical or theoretical value—they actually serve human beings, people loved and created by God.

In addition to historical reflection on the dignity of the scientific enterprise, scientists will be enriched by deep theological reflection on the nature of the scientific task. How is science affected by the fact that the world is a creation of God? What difference does it make to scientific investigation that scientists themselves are made in the image of God? How does the fall impact the faculties of the scientist? How do we find that middle way, discussed in chapter 2, between excessive modesty and unwarranted pride?

One helpful issue to consider is the way the nature of vocation defines important moral parameters for scientific work. Every vocation exists to serve the neighbor and is bound by God's moral law. In addition, because each vocation has a distinct place within God's economy (it defines a particular contribution to the social and moral order), it has special privileges and special responsibilities. Thus the brain surgeon has the special privilege of doing invasive brain surgery and the special responsibility of doing so in constructive ways. More generally, due to their expertise, scientists are authorized to do things that non-scientists (or scientists with different gifts and training) are not authorized to do; but they also have special responsibilities. Scientists occupy important positions of trust: they are stationed by God to love and serve their neighbor in ways that are beyond the ability of most of us.

As Christian scientists reflect on the moral issues that arise in their work, it is important that they do not ignore the rich resources provided in Scripture and centuries of reflection on Christian ethics. Failure to do so makes it very likely that secular standards of professional ethics will be uncritically embraced as "best practices" within a given area of science. This shortchanges scientists, who are not thereby motivated and encouraged by the understanding that theirs is a high and worthy calling to do good. And there is evidence that a low, pragmatic view of science is bad for the scientific community and those whom it serves. When scientific work is reduced to the quest for

such as cost-benefit analyses of both failing to act to abate rising temperatures on one side and aggressive abatement measures on the other.

For example, Bjorn Lomborg, who accepts anthropogenic climate change, argues against diverting vast amounts of money to climate abatement measures, because of a low likelihood of success, negative economic impact, and the danger of chronic underfunding of measures to reduce suffering from malaria, AIDS, and unsafe drinking water that have a solid track record.³¹⁴ Such a perspective may help students to consider our global stewardship obligations, rather than focusing on a single "hot topic." This is helpful to Christians because we need to reflect on the overall impact of our actions for the welfare of our neighbors in present and future generations. An ideal situation is one in which students can hear out the best arguments on all sides of the controversy, examine the relevant data, and develop an informed opinion about which claims are best supported by the available evidence.

Certainly, evolutionary theory lends itself to a "teach the controversy" approach that would help students to sift empirical science from ideology and consider the best arguments for and against various evolutionary claims. By focusing on how scientific claims can be confirmed or tested, and showing the relative strengths and weaknesses of various ideas, this approach to science education helps students to see the fallibility and limitations of scientific claims and arguments and has the clear educational objective of promoting critical thinking and objectivity.

For example, students will benefit from supplementing a full and accurate presentation of modern neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory and its supporting evidences with a thoughtful critique by credentialed scientists.³¹⁵ It is also very helpful for science educators to consider the insights of leading philosophers of science. Christian science teachers do their students a great service when they point out how different the data can look from the perspective of different fundamental assumptions about how science operates and what it allows. Even if it is not possible to pursue such discussions in class, educators can at least advise students of the existence of dissenting opinions and make them aware of good materials they can consult on their own time.

4. Investigators

Scientists working at universities, government agencies, and private companies should be encouraged toward deep reflection on the vocation of scientist. It is invaluable to spend time considering how great Christian scien-

³¹⁴ Bjorn Lomborg, *The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

³¹⁵ Again, there is a vast literature, but some excellent recent sources are: Behe, *The Edge of Evolution*; Meyer, *Signature in the Cell* (New York: HarperOne, 2009); and *Darwin's Doubt* (New York: HarperOne, 2013).

maximum funding and fame, it is not surprising that the scientific vocation is corrupted.

For example, in 2012, the *Guardian* newspaper published a series of articles on the way science funding and university policies have conspired to produce an epidemic of scientific fraud, including fabricated data, skewed statistical analysis, and references to non-existent studies and journals:

A recent paper in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* shows that since 1973, nearly a thousand biomedical papers have been retracted because someone cheated the system. That's a massive 67% of all biomedical retractions. And the situation is getting worse—last year, *Nature* reported that the rise in retraction rates has overtaken the rise in the number of papers being published.³¹⁶

A major concern is that scientists are a community and each scientist relies on the work of others. Fraudulent research may perpetuate false and dangerous ideas, inhibiting scientific progress and encouraging risky procedures and treatments for human subjects and patients. Here it is important to recover the idea that scientists are called to serve their peers and others by following the highest standards of honesty and integrity in their work.

What is more, secular professional codes of ethics have not always had a high view of the human beings that science affects. This is particularly troubling in the medical sciences and other areas of human experimentation. A Christian understanding of scientific vocation should bring with it a high view of human dignity and value, and should guard against the cynical and unbiblical view that some people are more valuable than others. Human persons are more than biological, psychological, and sociological resources to be valued only for their capacities and contributions to society. Rather, each person is a priceless gift of God.

The general concern is that as human beings are increasingly used as experimental subjects, they may be, consciously or unconsciously, reduced to experimental material. In *The Magician's Nephew*, C. S. Lewis voices this concern through the character of Uncle Andrew, and exposes the corrupt double standard that can allow a scientist to exalt himself into an elite category while reducing other human beings to objects of investigation. In the story, Uncle Andrew tricks two children, Polly and Digory, into wearing magic rings that transport them to a different world, even though he has no idea whether the world will be safe and he is risking the children's lives to satisfy his own curiosity. Uncle Andrew feels justified in this because he thinks scientists have a

³¹⁶ Pete Etchells and Suzi Gage, "Scientific Fraud Is Rife: It's Time to Stand Up for Good Science," *The Guardian*, Friday, November 2, 2012, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2012/nov/02/scientific-fraud-good-science>.

superior calling to anyone else's: "Ours ... is a high and lonely destiny."³¹⁷ And he has come to see that dumb animals are not as useful as human beings for the experiment he is doing: "I wanted two children. You see I'm in the middle of a great experiment. I've tried it on a guinea-pig and it seemed to work. But then a guinea-pig can't tell you anything. And you can't explain to it how to get back."³¹⁸

Uncle Andrew does not value Polly as a human being made in the image of God but only because her ability to communicate helps his experiment. When Digory rebukes him for sending Polly into a world that he could have investigated for himself, Uncle Andrew's response is revealing:

"Me? Me?..... A man at my time of life, and in my state of health, to risk the shock and danger of being flung suddenly into a different universe? Do you realize what you are saying? Think what Another World means—you might meet anything—anything."³¹⁹

Lewis goes on to skewer the double standard that allows Uncle Andrew to defend his own dignity and value while denying it to others. When Uncle Andrew meets a more powerful person, Jadis of Charn (who becomes the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*), he does not appreciate being reduced to her slave. As philosopher Immanuel Kant would argue, the problem with the idea that a scientist has a special privilege to use others as experimental material is that it cannot be universalized. The scientist would not appreciate being used as material for another scientist's experiment.

Lewis's example is fictional, but there are many painfully real examples of how such thinking has allowed horrific scientific abuses. One need only think of the Nazi eugenic experiments under Adolph Hitler. Science's noble calling was corrupted and men of science rationalized their evil by characterizing it as routine and socially expedient. Such a grim historical episode is not a condemnation of science by any means, but it is a cautionary reminder that every person and every human enterprise is susceptible to the corruption of sin.³²⁰

Another cautionary example of the danger of science separated from a high regard for human dignity and value is the notorious Tuskegee syphilis study of African-American men in the twentieth century (1932–1972). Patients gave no consent to the experiment, which left them untreated for a deadly

³¹⁷ C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (New York: Harper Trophy, 1994), 21.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

³²⁰ Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

disease, even after penicillin became available and could have provided treatment and cure.³²¹

Another example that is more contemporary (and also socially and politically controversial) is embryonic stem cell research. In such research, human embryos—human beings in the earliest stage of human life—are not treated as human beings or afforded the value of human life, but rather as a fitting subject for scientific research and experimentation. While human knowledge might be expanded in the process and some future suffering might be alleviated, such "research" cannot be morally sanctioned.³²²

One lesson that can be learned from these abuses of science is that science is never an excuse to deny the humanity and dignity of another person. The terms "subject" or "patient" must not be allowed to create the illusion that a person made in the image of God is merely a constituent of an experiment that will serve the interests of humanity as a collective or abstract entity. We must resist the temptation to conflate a person who is sick (physically or mentally) with an incidence of a sickness. Patients notice and appreciate caring doctors who take them seriously as persons—persons who happen to have a health condition—rather than treating them as "statistics" with a pattern of symptoms.

The Christian concept of vocation is again helpful here, as it reminds us that it is not our own interests but the interests of the neighbor that compel us to service in and through our various vocations. In Jesus' parable, the good Samaritan did not view the robbery victim as a crime statistic or offer aid in the hope of advancing his personal projects. Instead, he put the victim's welfare first, and then used the results of the available medical science to serve that person's needs:

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. (Luke 10:33–34)

So also the Christian who works in the sciences can see and understand that Christian faith and love motivate a concerted emphasis on using his or her abilities and skill for the well-being of human beings, who are created by God and endowed with dignity from Him. Such a scientist will not give up on the task of research and study, but will carry out his or her daily calling within the moral parameters of biblical theology. So, for example, a Christian medical researcher may indeed carry out stem cell research, but will choose to

³²¹ James Jones, *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, New and Expanded ed.* (New York: The Free Press, 1993).

³²² Cf. CTRC, *Christian Faith and Human Beginnings: Christian Care and Pre-Implantation Human Life* (2005); available at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lc&id=353>.

study the possibilities presented by research on umbilical or adult stem cells rather than embryonic stem cells.

As modern life becomes increasingly professionalized, regimented, bureaucratic, and mediated by impersonal technology, it is important to consider whether we are losing contact with the real people that God has called us to serve, and to be intentional about maintaining the genuine love, compassion, and concern for others that Christ embodies and commends. It is not only scientists, but all of us, who suffer alienation from one another through the proliferation of bureaucratic forms, the obsession with statistics, and the distancing of technology. As God became a real man and dwelt among us, speaking words of love and offering both physical and spiritual healing, we must first and foremost minister to real people with our real presence for their real good. We need to ask ourselves, "Am I helping someone today? Or am I only adding data for a report that helps my career or maintains my institution's viability?" If Christ had taken the latter attitude, he might have presented His Father with an impressive study of the state of human sin, but done nothing to heal it. Thanks be to God that Christ so loved us that He came in person, to bear our sins and take the punishment that we deserve, so that we may approach the throne of grace in confidence (Heb. 4:16). This is the pattern, putting the good of other people first, that we must emulate in science and everywhere else.

5. Non-scientists

Science affects everyone in modern societies, not merely because it develops the technologies and treatments we all use, but because it has emerged as a voice of cultural authority relevant to many of our most important decisions. However, this also creates a vulnerability for the non-scientist who is exposed to a cacophony of politically and ideologically charged claims made on behalf of science and, allegedly, with scientific approval or support.

One recommendation for non-scientists is that they learn discernment when they hear reports in the popular science media, especially if they overstate the degree of certainty possible in science, or if they are linked to an ideological agenda. As is true of all human beings, scientists have many non-scientific beliefs and may wish to use the cultural authority of science to support those beliefs. In the process, sober scientific findings are typically conjoined with controversial philosophical assumptions. For example, when the New Atheists declare that supernatural religious belief can be explained away, their background assumption is that religious belief is false. Thus, their speculative naturalistic accounts of religious belief—appealing to a "God spot" in the brain, or a "mind-virus," etc.—seem plausible, despite the lack of supporting data or serious testing.

As one example, consider New Atheist Richard Dawkins's attempt to explain away supernatural religious belief.

Natural selection builds child brains with a tendency to believe whatever their parents and tribal elders tell them. Such trusting obedience is valuable for survival: the analogue of steering by the moon for a moth. But the flip-side of trusting obedience is slavish gullibility. The inevitable by-product is vulnerability to infection by mind viruses... [T]he truster has no way of distinguishing good advice from bad.³²³

Dawkins theorizes that religion can be understood "as a by-product of normal psychological dispositions,"³²⁴ perhaps as "a by-product of the irrationality mechanisms that were originally built into the brain by selection for falling in love."³²⁵ It is a useful form of self-deception because it enables communities to cooperate under some shared goals and guidelines, thus promoting survival.

One major problem for Dawkins's argument is that he attempts to apply a universal rule only selectively. If it is true that our brains are configured by evolution to slavishly trust our elders, and that we have no way of distinguishing good advice from bad, then this would have to include the advice of scientists, especially as they increasingly function as the elders of modern technological societies. In other words, if Dawkins's account of our brains is correct, then we can have no good reason to believe it, since we are in no position to distinguish this truth from error.

A second and purely logical flaw in debunking accounts of religious (or moral) ideas is exposed by C. S. Lewis in his essay "Bulverism." Lewis pointed out that offering an account which might "explain away" why someone has a belief simply bypasses the question of whether the belief is true. That question can only be settled by investigation of the world outside people's minds and brains. Before the skeptic can legitimately claim that religious ideas derive from a tainted source, he must first show that they have no supporting evidence, or provide more compelling evidence against them.

In other words, you must first show that a man is wrong before you start explaining why he is wrong. The modern method is to assume without discussion that he is wrong and then distract his attention from this (the only real issue) by busily explaining how he became so silly.³²⁶

After all, no one would take seriously the idea that general relativity is false because modern brain-scanning techniques have shown what is really going on in a physicist's brain when he uses the theory to make predictions

³²³ Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 176.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 177.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 185.

³²⁶ C. S. Lewis, "Bulverism," in *God in the Dock*, 2nd ed., Walter Hooper, ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 273.

or conduct experiments. It is only because Dawkins has made the prior philosophical assumption that supernatural religious claims are false that he spends so little effort looking into the evidence.

The same general moral applies to a variety of other debunking strategies, such as the attempt to explain away religious experiences as a defect in the temporal lobes, the result of a “God gene” or of a misfiring “God-spot” in the brain. All of them assume without argument that no religion is grounded in evidence. Yet the central Christian claims are about Christ’s saving work in *history*, and therefore can be investigated using secular, empirical methods. In their book, *The Spiritual Brain*, neuroscientist Mario Beauregard and science journalist Denyse O’Leary provide a wonderful antidote to many of the overblown claims of secularists in the popular science media, and expose many of the recurring, unexamined philosophical assumptions that drive agenda-driven claims about what science shows.³²⁷

More generally, a good strategy when engaging any material using science to advocate for non-Christian conclusions is to consult the best evaluation of that work (for example, in book reviews, articles, or on blogs) from a qualified Christian thinker. Invariably what emerges is that when scientists seek to use science to discredit Christianity or theism in general, it is their non-scientific philosophical assumptions, and not the scientific data, that play the decisive role.

As one more example of this, consider a recent work by the atheist cosmologist, Lawrence Krauss, *A Universe From Nothing*.³²⁸ Krauss’s goal is to use modern cosmology to show that God is not necessary to explain the origin of the universe. In the course of the book, Krauss offers three scientific definitions of “nothing,” and argues that each of them allow the universe to arise from nothing, without God. Thus in chapter 9, “nothing” means empty space, which Krauss tells us, can expand and produce matter and radiation. In chapter 10, Krauss goes further, and defines “nothing” as the *absence of space*, in which “quantum gravity... might create an inflating universe directly from nothing.”³²⁹ And finally, in chapter 11, “nothing” is defined as the absence of the laws of physics, which laws might somehow arise at random from a multiverse.³³⁰

The problem with Krauss’s approach is that in every case, he has altered the standard definition of “nothing.” Logicians understand “nothing” as a universal negation: to say “Nothing is there” is equivalent to saying, “Given all of the things that exist, none of them is there.” By that understanding,

³²⁷ See Mario Beauregard and Denyse O’Leary, *The Spiritual Brain: A Neuroscientist’s Case for the Existence of the Soul* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

³²⁸ See fn 32, p. 17 above.

³²⁹ Krauss, *A Universe From Nothing*, 169.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 176.

empty space is not nothing, since nothing cannot expand. Likewise quantum gravity and, if it exists, the multiverse, are not nothing. Nothing has no potential to do anything. Thus a bad essay can be improved, but a non-existent essay cannot. Only what exists has the potential to produce any further result.

The real issue here is not scientific at all. It is a matter of metaphysics. An atheist thinks that the universe (or a multiverse) simply exists as a brute fact, whereas a theist thinks that the existence of the universe requires some explanation, and argues that this is provided by a supernatural, necessary being. Krauss ignores this reality because he dismisses all “philosophical and theological musings,”³³¹ and believes that science is the only source of knowledge. But the result is that Krauss is simply unaware of his own philosophical assumptions (such as scientism and naturalism). He is therefore unable to see that the origin of the universe is a profoundly philosophical question that cannot be adequately addressed without metaphysics.

C. S. Lewis frequently admonished Christians to read old books,³³² not because the old books are always right, and newer books are always wrong, but because the older books contain a valuable counter-perspective, preserving insights that our own age ignores. Contemporary debates about the role of science in public life and what this implies is often poorly informed by a sound historical perspective on the development of science and the interaction of science with theology and philosophy. Thus, when Krauss asserts that, unlike modern science, “theology has made no contribution to knowledge,”³³³ a well-informed Christian may respond that one cannot pit science against theology, because, in point of historical fact, modern science was in large measure an outgrowth of theology.

Assumptions made by all scientists today—including atheist and other non-Christian scientists—reflect a view of reality that derives from theological sources. Scientists are able to search for universal laws of nature because they presuppose that nature is a coherent, law-governed system—an assumption grounded in the theological idea that the world is the product of a single, rational Creator. Scientists make observations and conduct experiments to find out what is going on in natural world (rather than deducing its behavior from a preconceived philosophy) because they assume that world is contingent—an idea grounded in the theological idea that the world is the creation of a free being who might have created differently. Scientists are confident that they can discover the truth because there is objective truth in the world to discover and their own minds are reliably attuned to that truth. These, too, are assumptions ultimately grounded in the theological idea that the divine logos is reflected both in nature and in the minds of those made in God’s image.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 143.

³³² Lewis, “On the Reading of Old Books,” in *God in the Dock*.

³³³ Krauss, *A Universe From Nothing*, 144.

More generally, non-scientists will benefit greatly from reading widely in the history, theology, and philosophy of science. This will quickly reveal the fact that science is not done in a vacuum, but is always influenced by a complex variety of non-scientific beliefs. By becoming aware of these beliefs, one can more effectively disentangle the science proper from other ideas that may motivate science and may be used to evaluate its findings. When it is confidently claimed that pursuing science requires abandoning many Christian ideas as outmoded, superstitious relics of our pre-scientific past, Christians can simply point out the great contributions of historical and contemporary scientists who not only accepted Christian doctrine, but who found it to be a source of encouragement and support.³³⁴ Indeed, the history of science is filled with stories of men and women who viewed faith in God as a motivation and source of strength for their calling. Countless members of the scientific community today share such convictions (they are hardly outdated!) and, God willing, their numbers will increase.

6. Conclusion

While much more could be said, it is hoped that the examples and discussion in this chapter will help to motivate further reading, classes and discussion that will benefit Christian students, teachers, researchers and non-scientific laity. If we reflect on the interdependence of our different vocations, and apply that insight specifically to science, it may generate more Bible studies, seminars, convocations and conferences that bring these groups of people together with our clergy and other professional church workers to discuss the most constructive Christian responses to science, its findings, and the claims made on its behalf.

In the process, we can encourage more Christians to pursue careers and vocations in science, confident of their calling and with a high moral motivation. We can also aid students and teachers, seeking the best strategies for handling controversy, especially as it impacts on the Christian faith. And we can see scientists themselves as a great resource in the body of Christ, those best qualified to help us understand what science is really saying and best equipped to inspire young people to follow them into scientific vocations. Together with the other resources in this report, it is hoped this final chapter will promote more constructive dialogue about the intersection of science and Christian theology.

³³⁴ An excellent place to begin is Stanley Jaki’s accessible yet learned work, *The Savior of Science*. There is also a recent assessment of Jaki’s enormous contribution to understanding the interplay of science and the Christian faith by Stacy Trasancos, *Science was Born of Christianity: The Teaching of Fr. Stanley L. Jaki* (Titusville, FL: The Habitation of Chimham Publishing, 2014).

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V. Res. 3-10A Task Force Report

The 65th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, St. Louis, July 20–25, 2013, considered 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.” The resolution was adopted as presented, Yes: 884; No: 25. (See Attachment A for complete resolution.)

Task Force Membership: The resolution defines that the task force is to include, but not be limited to, representatives from the Council of Presidents, the seminaries, and the Concordia University System. Task Force members:

The Rev. Terry Cripe, President, Ohio District, task-force chairman

The Rev. John Fale, Executive Director, LCMS Office of International Mission, task-force secretary

The Rev. Dr. Dan Gard, President, Concordia University Chicago

The Rev. Dr. Edward Grimenstein, LCMS Office of International Mission

The Rev. Dr. Dan May, President, Indiana District

The Rev. Dr. Joel Okamoto, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

The Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders, President, Iowa District East

Chaplain (Col.) Rev. Dr. Jonathan Shaw, United States Army

Chaplain (U.S. Navy Capt. ret.) Rev. Dr. John Wohlrabe, LCMS Second Vice-President

Addendum I to Task Force Membership: Dr. Gard accepted a call during the task-force process from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., to Concordia University Chicago. Chaplain Craig Muehler, (U.S. Navy Capt. ret.), director of the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces, served as a consultant and participated in three of the four meetings.

Addendum II to Task Force Membership: LCMS first vice-president Rev. Dr. Herbert C. Mueller Jr. communicated to the task force that he received correspondence from a pastor on candidate status who expressed disappointment that someone who is, or has been, on candidate status was not appointed to the task force. Dr. Grimenstein provided clarification that he was on candidate status following his medical retirement from the United States Army as a military chaplain and has a fresh perspective of what it means to be on candidate status.

Prior to the first meeting, Rev. Cripe proposed to the task force that he send a questionnaire to each district president. Additionally, task-force members were encouraged to contact workers on candidate and non-candidate status to listen to their concerns and recommendations.

The task force met by telephone conference call on three occasions: Sept. 2, 2014; Nov. 7, 2014; and Jan. 16, 2015.

Summary Observations of the Task Force

Through solicited and unsolicited communication from church workers without calls, the task force was made aware of the specific concerns outlined by the Synod in convention in Resolution 3-10A, regarding ordained and commissioned ministers who are without calls. The task force recognizes the urgent need to respond to this complex matter with compassion and thoughtfulness. Moreover, the task force shares the concern of Synod that individual workers and their families endure significant hardship in their loss of vocational call, which has financial, emotional, spiritual, and physical impacts. While awaiting a call, a worker can hear that he or she is “overqualified” for secular employment and so find it difficult to be hired, especially if the employer knows that the worker could accept a call and leave at any time.

Marriage and family relationships are strained by this economic hardship. Some workers did not know what process they should follow to get their names on call lists. The task force learned that workers on candidate and non-candidate status at times feel abandoned by the very church that they wish to serve, if they have not received communications from their district office. They are bewildered when they read information from Synod offices stating that there are not sufficient graduates to fill placement calls, and they are eager to serve. Yet first calls (placement calls) follow a very different process than calls for those on candidate and non-candidate status, as outlined in our bylaws. While there is no easy solution to the dilemma of qualified and willing workers who are eager to serve in our Lord’s church yet cannot obtain a call, the church can respond by learning more about what being on candidate and non-candidate status means, listening to them in the midst of their struggles, supporting them in meaningful ways with compassion and care of their souls, and speaking the truth in love to those whose circumstances will make it difficult for them to receive consideration for another call.

A survey of questionnaires returned from district presidents reveals that there are 179 ordained ministers on candidate status and 198 ordained ministers on non-candidate status, for a total of 377. Of those 377, the following *primary* reasons were listed for their status with accompanying statistics:

Health matters	36
Age	25
Continuing Education	19
Employed in another field	67
Resigned due to lack of congregational funding	37
Resigned due to congregational problems not of pastor’s making	36
Resigned due to congregational problems of the pastor’s making	84
Retired	18

Of the 377 total, four were due to a military chaplaincy call that ended and seven were due to a missionary whose position ended.

A survey of questionnaires returned from district presidents reveals that there are 474 commissioned ministers on candidate status and 1,161 commissioned ministers on non-candidate status, for a total of 1,635. Of those 1,635 total, the following *primary* reasons were listed for their status with accompanying statistics:

Health matters	46
Age	50
Continuing Education	82
Employed in another field	257
Resigned due to lack of funding	153
Resigned due to congregation/school problems not of worker’s making	75
Resigned due to congregation/school problems of the worker’s making	53
Other—unknown reason	162
Other—care for family	240
Other—moved for spouse’s career	89
Other—marital/family difficulties	75
Other—candidate status expired	138

The task force discussed this information at length, listened to proposed solutions that came from individuals on candidate and non-candidate status, as well as from task force members, and formulated recommendations. 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. However, there are ways for the church to assist those who will lose or have lost their call in a manner that cares for the ministers and their families during their time without call.

Final Recommendations of the Task Force

1. Military and institutional chaplains and returning missionaries should notify their respective district president as soon as possible when leaving their current call. Graduate students on candidate status should notify their district president of their date of availability for pastoral calls. The district president will distribute a list of available chaplains, missionaries, and graduate students (biannually/quarterly as requested) among other district presidents and calling agencies where appropriate.
2. District presidents should guide pastoral candidates who are no longer qualified to be placed on call lists to explore another vocation.
3. Recommend a synodwide process that utilizes existing resources, such as Concordia Plan Services, Soldiers of the Cross, and professional counseling, to assist and support candidates while they are in the midst of vocational discernment.
4. In circumstances where a pastor resigns as a result of conflict between the pastor and members of the congregation, the district president will provide pastoral care to the congregation and urge that issues be resolved prior to submitting a call list for future calls. The district president will ensure that the pastor and his family receive pastoral care.
5. Congregations are encouraged, where appropriate and feasible, to provide the opportunity for pastoral candidates to provide pastoral functions under a supervisor who is approved by the district president.
6. Recommend to the Council of Presidents to discuss and clarify candidate and non-candidate status and time limits of candidate status.

District presidents are encouraged to provide for the pastoral support of workers while on candidate status and provide periodic information that the candidate's information has been shared with calling agencies (congregations, schools, Recognized Service Organizations).

John A. Fale, *Secretary*

Attachment A

To Appoint a Task Force to Study the Call Process for Returning Missionary and Military Chaplains and Other Rostered Church Workers without a Call

RESOLUTION 3-10A

President's Report, Part 2 (TB, p. 20); Overtures 3-24; 7-17 (CW, pp. 155; 255-56); Resolution 7-06 (TB, p. 150)

Rationale

In our life together as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, there is great concern for professional church workers in candidate and non-candidate status who are without calls, including returning military chaplains and missionaries. Committees 3 (Life Together) and 7 (Structure and Ecclesiastical Matters) have become aware of the urgent need to address this issue with compassion.

However, the situation is not only urgent but intricate. Any solution needs to be one that upholds the doctrine of the call while taking

into account any necessary bylaw changes and their ramifications. Precipitous action without more thoughtful consideration may result in an incomplete solution or unforeseen consequences.

For these reasons, Committee 3 is encouraging immediate action by district presidents and calling on congregations to address the pressing human need of such workers. At the same time, the committee believes that a task force is necessary in order to recommend a comprehensive solution.

WHEREAS, Ordained missionaries and military chaplains have diverse experience and skills in preaching the Gospel to various peoples; and

WHEREAS, Ordained field missionaries and military chaplains serve in a temporary position which eventually comes to a conclusion and are available for and desire pastoral calls; and

WHEREAS, There are other categories of ordained and commissioned professional church workers who are also available for calls and service to the church; and

WHEREAS, It is poor stewardship that these gifts from God are not being fully utilized because a call has not been received in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, As of January 2013, 207 ordained and 611 commissioned church workers on candidate status, along with some on non-candidate status, were seeking calls; and

WHEREAS, Soldiers of the Cross exists to serve both active and inactive professional church workers and their families who are in need; therefore be it

Resolved, That each district president be encouraged earnestly to give specific and individual attention to LCMS professional church workers on both candidate and non-candidate status; and be it further

Resolved, That LCMS congregations be encouraged to give prayerful consideration to calling professional church workers who are on candidate or non-candidate status and who desire a call; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod appoint a task force to address these matters; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force study the need for a placement process for returning military chaplains and missionaries; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force also study the candidate status and non-candidate status of all church workers to aid and encourage congregations and other entities in calling qualified candidates in a timely manner; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force include but not be limited to representatives from the Council of Presidents, the seminaries, and the Concordia University System; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force make a report and recommendations to the Synod no later than one year prior to the 2016 Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Office of National Mission be encouraged to continue its service through Soldiers of the Cross; and be it finally

Resolved, That Synod congregations and their members be encouraged to give to the Soldiers of the Cross annual fund drive.

Action: Adopted (9)

(When discussion of Res. 3-10A was begun during Session 8, a motion to suspend the Orders of the Day to allow 40 minutes for discussion failed. When discussion resumed during Session 9, a motion to amend the resolution was introduced and then withdrawn. The resolution was adopted as presented [Yes: 884; No: 25].)

Attachment B

**District Questionnaires for Ordained
and Commissioned Ministers on Candidate and
Non-Candidate Status***

	Ordained Candidate		Ordained Non-candidate		Commissioned Candidate		Commissioned Non-candidate	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Health Matters	11	6.1	25	12.6	13	2.7	33	2.8
Age	11	6.1	14	7.0	18	3.7	32	2.7
Pursuit of another degree	11	6.1	8	4.0	23	4.8	59	5.0
Employed in another field	15	8.3	52	26.2	60	12.6	197	16.9
Resigned due to lack of congregational funding	21	11.7	16	8.0	78	16.4	75	6.4
Resigned due to congregational problems not of his making	22	12.2	14	7.0	36	7.5	39	3.3
Resigned due to congregational problems of his making	39	21.7	45	22.7	23	4.8	30	2.5
Removed by the congregation for cause	3	1.6	3	1.5	16	3.3	7	0.6
Other—transfer in w/candidate status	4	2.2	1	0.5	8	1.6	12	1.0
Other—military chaplain without a call	2	1.1	2	1.0				
Other—pursue other employment	3	1.6	5	2.5				
Other—position ended (i.e. Missionary, Mil.)	5	2.7	2	1.0				
Other—unknown	3	1.6	10	5.0	45	9.4	117	10.0
Other—congregation closed	1	0.5	0	0				
Other—not re-elected to Synod position	2	1.1	0	0				
Other—family care (i.e. aging parent, children)	2	1.1	0	0	32	6.7		
Other—moved closer to family	1	0.5	0	0				
Other—moved for spouse's career/education	3	1.6	0	0	29	6.1	60	5.1
Other—marital/family difficulties	2	1.1	1	0.5	5	1.0	70	6.0
Other—burnout	1	0.5	0	0				
Other—retired	18	10.0	0	0	1	0.2	0	0
Other—reinstatement					21	4.4	2	0.1
Other—no LCMS school in the area					6	1.2	7	0.6
Other—became public school/non LCMS teacher					6	1.2	18	1.5
Other—position ended/RIF					22	4.6	2	0.1
Other—congregation/school closed					17	3.5	12	1.0
Other—moved without a call					9	1.8	33	2.8
Other—missionary/return from mission field					3	0.6	1	0
Other—not seeking a call					2	0.4	9	0.7
Other—non-candidate status expired; no reason given					1	0.2	137	11.8
Other—returning to LCMS congregation; accepting call							1	0
Other	0	0	0	0				
Total	179		198		474		1161	

* 32 of 35 districts responded

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VI. Report of the 2013 Res. 4-06A Task Force Executive Summary July 9, 2015

The report that follows is in response to Res. 4-06A of the 2013 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). It attempts to address the convention's mandate "to resolve questions about the service of licensed lay deacons" in LCMS congregations.

A basic, Lutheran theological foundation underlies the work of the 2013 Res. 4-06A Task Force. The triune God has revealed His salvation in the Son, who justifies all who believe in Him. Faith comes by the Spirit as the Gospel of Christ is heard (Rom. 10:17). Such proclamation comes by the command of our Lord Jesus, His empowering Spirit, and the gift of "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). Those who believe are Christ's Church, His disciples, flock, and priestly people (cp. 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 6:1–7; John 10:16; 1 Pet. 2:4–9).

Thus, Lutherans confess both the priesthood of believers, sharing Christ's love in word and deed in their daily lives, and also Christ's gift of preachers ("the office of preaching," AC V). By the office, the Gospel is heard and the sacraments are administered in the church. We confess that the church is the assembly of all who believe in Christ, existing where the Gospel is purely preached and the Gospel's sacraments are administered rightly (AC VII, VIII). The Gospel Word of life and salvation is spoken both by Christ's royal priests and His Gospel preachers. The priesthood of believers and the Office of the Ministry are complementary and should not be set in opposition, either by hyper-clericalism or by anti-clericalism.

Every Christian can and should share the Gospel in daily life. God also directs the church to set aside men for the Office of the Ministry to preach, teach, provide for confession and absolution, administer the sacraments, provide Christ's care for God's people, and lead His people in His mission (see, e.g., Acts 8:4–25; 11:19–26; 14:23; and Eph. 4:11). Moreover, the office of preaching is not self-chosen. Rather, those who are to serve pastorally are to be "faithful" both in life and doctrine; that is, they are "above reproach" and "able to teach" (1 Cor. 4:1–2; 1 Tim. 3:2–3; 2 Tim. 2:1–2, 24–26). They serve because they are properly prepared, examined for fitness, called by a congregation, and ordained by the wider church. Men are put under orders to be Christ's servants and to speak and act "in the stead and place of Christ" (Ap VII and VIII, 28). This threefold perspective—examination, congregational call, ordination—underlies the AC XIV declaration that no one should publicly preach or teach unless rightly called.

For over twenty-five years, there has been controversy within the LCMS over the matter of laymen who are serving LCMS congregations in a pastoral capacity. The rationale for such activity has been need: congregations served are typically either unable to find or to

support a pastor for financial, geographical, or demographic reasons. The laymen who serve them do so out of a desire to serve where needed the most, often for no remuneration, and normally under the supervision of an ordained pastor.

Yet, although none should deny these challenges, these men serve LCMS congregations, but do so without having been examined either by faculty or colloquy, without a synodically recognized call, and without the wider church's affirmation of their ministry via ordination. Thus, the practice has been divisive, with theological objections raised, primarily, on the basis of AC XIV.

There are genuine practical pastoral needs, and there are genuine theological concerns regarding the Office of the Ministry that must be addressed. Just as significant is the reality that this unresolved controversy has led to division, ill will, rancor, polarization, and stereotypes. One side accuses the other of a refusal to support mission while, in turn, the corollary charge is a refusal to take theology seriously. The result is distraction from the calling of the church to proclaim the pure Gospel to the world (Matt. 28:19).

After visitations to districts, discussions with lay deacons and supervising pastors, consultation with the Council of Presidents, and input from theologians, the Task Force is hereby reporting to the Synod as mandated by 2013 Res. 4-06A. Briefly, here is what we propose:

1. Lay deacons who are regularly serving pastorally—as the *de facto* pastors of LCMS congregations—should be examined by a special LCMS colloquy process, receive further theological preparation where necessary, and be approved for ordination. Their roster status would be that of a specific ministry pastor (SMP). (See Recommendation 1.)
2. The ongoing reality of geographic, financial, and demographic challenges that make it difficult to fill the calling needs of LCMS congregations and missions should be addressed by means of SMP and various other nonresidential pastoral-training programs in which future pastors are identified locally and then prepared for service. Need-based financial assistance for preparation will be available through the Pastoral Education Department of the LCMS. (See Recommendations 2 and 3.)
3. Districts should not neglect to explore other means of addressing the challenges to provide the ministry of Word and Sacrament for its congregations and missions. Such means include multi-point parishes, technological aids, and greater use of inactive pastors. (See Recommendations 4, 5, and 6.)
4. The role of the royal priesthood of baptized believers is not demeaned, but enhanced by a right understanding and practice of the Office of Public Ministry, for as believers share the Gospel in their daily lives and vocations, they are and always have been the primary arm of Christian outreach to an unbelieving world. This evangelistic or witnessing role should be emphasized and enhanced, not diminished. (See Recommendations 7 and 8.)

May the Holy Spirit guide the discussion and consideration of this report, in the name of Christ Jesus, to the glory of the Father.

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VII. 2013 Res. 4-06A Task Force Report to the Synod

In the Name of Jesus

The 2013 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod adopted Res. 4-06A: To Address Questions re Service of Licensed Lay Deacons. Its final two paragraphs state:

Resolved, That the President of the Synod establish a task force consisting of members from the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the Council of Presidents, the Praesidium, and seminary faculties to develop a plan anchored in the Word, in consultation with licensed lay deacons and those who supervise and are served by them, to resolve questions about the service of licensed lay deacons serving congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with the Word and Sacraments of Christ; and be it finally

Resolved, That the plan and its proposed implementation be reported to the Synod one year before the 2016 convention.

The following report has been prepared in response to the convention's resolution.

Introduction (The Church Lives by the Word and Sacraments of Christ)

When the eleven disciples gathered together with the risen Lord Jesus Christ in Galilee, He sent them forth with the command to go to the nations and to make disciples, baptizing and teaching, promising to be present with them to the end of the age (Matt. 28:16–20). St. Luke tells us that Jesus also reminded the apostles that their eyewitness testimony to fulfillment of the Old Testament's promises in His suffering, death, and resurrection would be the ongoing basis for the preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins—a preaching that would be empowered by the Holy Spirit's "power from on high" (Luke 24:44–49; see also Acts 1:7–8). So it is that Christ has given "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers" (Eph. 4:11).¹

The Lord's promised presence and His command to preach the saving Gospel to the nations establish both the daily witness of the entire Church and the Office of Preaching² in the Church. Acts 8:4–25 and 11:19–26 tell of persecution that followed the death of Stephen in Jerusalem and how the Early Church was scattered around the Mediterranean world. Christ's holy people were scattered, but not silenced. As believers sought refuge, they also spoke the Word of life and salvation in Christ Jesus, first to Jews, then Samaritans, and then, increasingly, to Gentiles. Ordinary Christians did what every Christian is called to do, attesting to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Philip, one of the men who had been designated to assist in the care of widows (Acts 6:1–6), was one of the scattered flock who proclaimed the Gospel in Samaria and through whom the Holy Spirit worked signs of exorcism and healing (8:5–8).³ As word of conversions in Samaria came to the apostles, they traveled to Samaria to affirm the evangelistic outreach that had taken place.

In Acts 11, set in Antioch, scattered believers again told of Christ, and as they spoke, the Holy Spirit confirmed His assurance that faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17). Once again, new believers were added to the people of God. The Jerusalem Church then sent the preacher Barnabas, who rejoiced in the work of God's grace, nurtured them, and exhorted them in their new found confession. Barnabas soon called the apostle Paul to join him, to teach the growing Church.

In Acts 14:21–23, Luke shows how the apostolic ministry of Paul and Barnabas included both evangelization of new believers and also solidification of the Church. The apostolic proclamation of the Word

of God served to confirm or "strengthen the souls" of the new disciples and to "encourage"⁴ them to hold the true faith—all this in order to face the sobering reality that it is through tribulation that believers enter the Kingdom (v. 22). Because this proclamation cannot be left to chance, Paul and Barnabas also were instrumental in establishing the Office of Preaching by means of the appointment⁵ of elders in each of the newly established churches (v. 23).

The Word of God declares all Christ's people to be "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for [God's] own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). By hearing the Gospel from scattered believers who proclaimed "the excellencies of Him who called [them] out of darkness into His marvelous light," others were called from darkness into "marvelous light" in Samaria and Antioch. By the Office of Preaching and the Sacraments, these new believers were nurtured in faith and the Church was established as the gathering of those who were hearing the Gospel preached and receiving the blessed Sacraments from Christ's authorized ministers. Then as now, both the priesthood of the baptized and the preaching office were instrumental in the work of adding believers—Christians—and establishing the Church, Christ's holy people, in ever new locations. The Office of Preaching in the church and the proclamation of ordinary believers in daily life do not compete, but they correlate with and complement each other.

Because it is by means of the saving Word and Sacraments that believers are added and nurtured in faith and the Church continues its growth, we pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His fields (Matt. 9:37–38)—men whose vocation will be the public ministry. So that faith may be nurtured, congregations obey Christ and seek under-shepherds (pastors) to preach, teach, and administer Christ's Holy Sacraments, even as Christ called and sent His apostles to build the Church as they preached and taught, administered the Sacraments, and forgave sins in His name (Matt. 28:19–20; John 20:21–23). These same apostles ensured that the preaching office (Office of the Ministry) would continue as the Church grew and a second generation of Christians was born (2 Tim. 2:1–2; Titus 1:5–9). They also affirmed the proclamation of the laity in daily life (see above on Acts 8 and 11). The Church lives by the power of the Gospel in witness, preaching, and Sacraments. So she needs the daily testimony of the priesthood of believers and also the pastoral office. In so doing, Christ builds His Church, and the gates of hell do not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).

These biblical passages and events relate to truth confessed in the Augsburg Confession. Following its central confession of the Gospel of justification by grace through faith in Christ (Article IV), it affirms in Article V that people come to saving faith because "God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel."⁶ Since the same Lord Jesus who establishes the Church also establishes the Office of Preaching, it is neither an optional, pragmatic convenience nor a responsibility delegated by the Church for the sake of good order (see Luke 10:1, where the Lord appoints [ἀναδείκνυμι] 72 preachers). Article VII adds: "It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel."⁷

Therefore, when a congregation has no pastor, a very real and pressing need exists that must be met. Throughout its history, the church has addressed this need by preparing men to be ministers

of the Gospel who are faithful to the Gospel and Scriptures, of high moral character, and—especially—“able to teach” the saving truth of Christ with clarity, competence, and gentleness (see 1 Tim. 3:2–3; 2 Tim. 2:1–2; 2:24–26). Lutheran churches have addressed the need for pastors by seminary training and in various other ways.⁸

Providing pastoral care has often been challenging, however. At present in the LCMS, several difficulties may be mentioned.

1. *Financial Challenges:* Many smaller congregations have inadequate resources to provide for a full-time pastor (and sometimes even for a part-time pastor) to serve them and are struggling to find or afford even temporary pastoral service.⁹
2. *Geographical Challenges:* In other locales, small, isolated congregations in remote areas face not only a similar financial challenge but also a difficulty in finding pastors who are in geographic proximity to them.
3. *Demographic Challenges:* Urban, minority, and ethnically diverse congregations and missions—particularly those located in areas with few retired pastors—may have no practical options to fill their pastoral needs with ordained, synodically rostered pastors.

Background (Laymen Serving in a Pastoral Role in the LCMS)

The LCMS has, since its inception, recognized our Lord’s mandate for the pastoral office, as attested to in Scripture and the Confessions. Originally published in 1852 as *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt*, Walther’s *Church and Ministry* lays forth quite clearly a scriptural and confessional case for distinguishing the Office of the Ministry from the priesthood of believers, emphasizing that the ministry¹⁰ is a particular office established by God which the church is bound to uphold by divine command and not on an arbitrary or optional basis.¹¹ *Church and Ministry* anchors this teaching in a multitude of scriptural witnesses and AC V, XIV, XXVIII, Ap XIII, the Treatise, and FC SD XII, among other confessional sources. In addition, Walther cites Luther and many Lutheran fathers to make his case. Such an array of biblical, confessional, and historical witnesses to the necessity of a rightly called Office of the Ministry has led many in the LCMS to voice significant discomfort and objections to the practice of lay preaching and administration of the Sacraments that is present in some LCMS congregations.

As a consequence of such circumstances, two valid concerns are seemingly entangled: the need for people to have access to God’s saving Means of Grace and the necessity of regular pastoral administration of those means. These two valid concerns and the tension that may ensue from them is not unique to the Missouri Synod or new to Lutherans. Historically, the Synod has sought to serve small congregations and missions or other churches in challenging circumstances and locales primarily by having pastors serve in dual or multi-point parishes. It has also addressed other challenges by providing alternative, nonresidential training programs for clergy, such as Distance Education Leading to Ordination (DELTO) and its recent replacement, Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) training, and also through the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT), the Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS), and the Cross-cultural Ministry Center of Concordia Seminary (CMC), centered at Concordia University, Irvine. More recently, an increasing number of laymen have been serving in congregations and ministries of the LCMS in ways that involve pastoral responsibilities, such as preaching and the administration of the Sacraments. Sometimes laymen serve only infrequently when a pastor is ill or unavailable for a Sunday by, for example, reading a sermon prepared by the pastor. In other cases, however, laymen receive some training on the district level and serve as deacons in

an ongoing pastoral role, but under varying levels of supervision by ordained pastors of the Synod.

The practice of nonordained men serving pastorally has resulted in questions, objections, and debate. Concerns have been raised, primarily, because of the Synod’s shared commitment to Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession, which states: “Concerning church government it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call.”¹²

The passage of 1989 Res. 3-05B increased these discussions and debates. The genesis of the resolution was the report of a Lay Worker Study Committee (hereafter referred to as Committee), appointed in 1987 and asked to make recommendations to the Synod regarding “consecrated lay workers” of the LCMS. The Committee was asked to consider three needs in particular:

1. For church workers to plant new congregations
2. For outreach to minorities and non-English speaking groups
3. For the care of isolated congregations¹³

The Committee considered such issues as the training of such workers, whether those who are called to positions that involve pastoral functions should be ordained, and what nomenclature should be used for these workers, specifically mentioning the idea of “renaming ‘lay minister’ and ‘lay ministry’ as ‘deacon’ and ‘diaconate.’”¹⁴

In its report to the 1989 Convention, the Committee focused on three areas of “lay ministry” (using the term *ministry* in a broad sense as all types of service in the church). Its first focus was “the question of pastoral services, functions, and responsibilities being carried out by men who have not completed a seminary program and who are not ordained.” Second, matters “of nomenclature, preparation, deployment, and supervision” were addressed. Third, the report explored ways of involving the laity in expanded service to the church “and especially in the planting of new missions.”¹⁵

The report recommended that Synod continue its programs for “Certified Professional Church Workers, Lay,” and also recommended district-sponsored training programs for laity with standards to be developed appropriate to the needs laity would fill. The report held to the ideal that only an ordained pastor should preach and administer the Sacraments. It also, however, indicated a need for laymen to serve temporarily in preaching and the administration of the Sacraments, recommending that the title “deacon” be used for such men while serving “in exceptional circumstances or in emergencies.” (It noted that such pastoral services were already being exercised by about 135 laymen under Synod’s approval in special situations at that time.) Distinguishing four functions of the Office of Public Ministry—preaching, leading public worship, administration of the Sacraments in worship, and exercising the Office of the Keys (absolution)—the report recommended that only the first three functions be exercised by deacons, prepared and licensed for up to two years by their districts, and that such pastoral responsibilities be carried out only while under the supervision of an ordained pastor.¹⁶

The 1989 Res. 3-05B adopted the Lay Worker Study Committee recommendations and guidelines as indicated in the foregoing paragraphs. The resolution included a final section on bylaw review recommending that the Synod provide a means of placement, supervision, listing, and referral for all “Certified Church Workers, Lay”; that the Council of Presidents provide the necessary arrangements for such Synod services; and that the necessary bylaws for such actions be prepared for the 1992 convention.

Debate at the 1989 convention over this resolution was vigorous and protracted. It continued thereafter, with objections to the resolution raised by a partner church body, by LCMS districts, and by

pastors and congregations. Subsequent LCMS conventions featured further studies, proposals, and resolutions that attempted to address concerns raised by the 1989 resolution. In 1992, provision was made for laymen who had served for ten years or more in a pastoral capacity to apply for colloquy (Res. 3-08).¹⁷ Then 1995 Res. 3-07A required laymen performing pastoral functions “to apply for admission into the pastoral ministry in the Synod” within two years unless there were “extreme and unusual circumstances” preventing such application—a resolution that, in effect, ended LCMS endorsement of the LLD programs. The 1998 convention called for a task force to study the “growing number of congregations whose pastoral needs cannot be provided by full-time pastors” (Res. 5-09). The task force reported to the 2001 convention and suggested a mediating approach to the theological and practical concerns, an approach that would have rescinded the 1989 and 1995 convention actions regarding laymen serving in a pastoral capacity. A resolution to act on the task force recommendations was presented, but a substitute resolution from the floor was passed instead, rescinding only 1995 Res. 3-07A and authorizing the districts of the Synod to continue training lay deacons “as directed by the spirit of the 1989 Wichita Res. 3-05B.” It also called for the appointment of an oversight Committee to revise DELTO “in order to help address the needs to recruit and train more ordained pastors.”¹⁸

Also, 2004 Res. 5-09 “To Affirm District Programs that Equip Laity for Ministry” affirmed the LCMS District lay-training programs “for mission work.” The resolution addressed “ministry” in a general sense, without specifically referring to preaching or the administration of the Sacraments. It also resolved that “the new Board for Pastoral Education with the guidance of the seminary faculties develop a standardized core curriculum for District lay-training programs and coordinate a national listing of participants.”¹⁹

The study of revisions needed for DELTO, called for in 2001, was completed by the 2007 convention, which established the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program as a successor to DELTO. The SMP program was designed to provide a way of training candidates for specialized ministries, including the kinds of ministries in which the deacons of various LCMS districts were serving (2007 Res. 5-01B). In addition, 2007 Res. 5-02 asked the Board of Parish Education and Council of Presidents “to study the situations currently served by licensed lay deacons to determine whether there continues to be a genuine need for this program” and to report its findings to the 2010 convention. Based on its report, a resolution to the 2010 convention was proposed (2010 Res. 5-03A, “To Address Lay Deacons”). After extensive debate, the resolution was returned to its floor committee without convention vote.

The 2013 LCMS convention once again took up this matter and called for the CTRC to develop resources on this topic and for the president to promote its study and to establish a task force that would “resolve questions about the service of licensed lay deacons” in LCMS congregations (Res. 4-06A). The task force report was to be submitted to the members of Synod one year in advance of the 2016 convention. President Matthew Harrison appointed the members of the task force (TF 4-06A) in the fall of 2013. They are Deacon Jason Kiefer (New Jersey District), Dr. Herbert Mueller (Praesidium), Dr. Roger Paavola (Mid-South District president), Rev. Russ Sommerfeld (Nebraska District president), Dr. James Voelz (CS-St. Louis faculty member), Dr. Roland Ziegler (member of the faculty of CTS-Fort Wayne and the CTRC), and Rev. Larry Vogel (CTRC staff and chairman of the task force). The members of the task force have sought to fulfill their assigned responsibilities and are hereby reporting to the convention as required.

In assessing our responsibilities, TF 4-06A recognizes that the matter of licensing lay deacons for preaching and sacramental administration has been a divisive, polarizing aspect of Synod’s life for over a quarter century. Sadly, in some cases, ill will and animosity have developed. Therefore, the task force has attempted to take seriously its assignment to address the concerns and causes of division. We have sought to determine the extent to which laymen are currently serving in a pastoral capacity and the stated reasons for such service, to understand the nature of the theological concerns that are relevant to this matter, to remove stereotypes of both proponents and critics of the service of deacons, and to suggest a way forward that is faithful to Scripture and the Confessions, nurtures the mission and ministry of the church, and promotes the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3).

Current Status

A Spring 2014 survey of LCMS districts found that about 525 individuals have completed district training programs for lay deacons²⁰ and are currently involved in congregational ministries or mission efforts (see Appendix A). Of these, 331 men are serving in some pastoral capacity in the Synod as licensed lay deacons (LLD)—either regularly or occasionally preaching and/or administering the Sacraments—and 194 individuals (men and women) are serving in various ways other than preaching or administration of Sacraments. (By comparison, in 2009 540 individuals were then involved in mission or ministry in general terms, with 320 preaching or administering Sacraments and 220 involved in other ways.)

Visitations of six districts with the largest number of active deacons and/or graduates of district training programs provided helpful insights. The rationale for the programs emphasized during the visits generally included three points:

1. Most frequently mentioned was the number of *small congregations*—particularly those in rural and urban areas—that are *unable to support a pastor* financially and have difficulty finding supply or vacancy pastors to serve them.
2. Next in importance was the shortage of ordained pastors available to serve LCMS congregations in certain *isolated geographic locales*, both in terms of their availability for calls and also their ability to serve with minimal remuneration.
3. Finally, few LCMS pastors are equipped for ministry, church planting, and mission *outreach in urban settings and elsewhere among racial and ethnic minorities*. Moreover, such missions tend to have minimal financial resources and frequently cannot support the costs of a full-time minister.

Proponents of the districts’ programs frequently mentioned the need for and value of specially trained laymen who work under pastoral supervision to supply these needs. They often suggested that such programs have developed a neglected aspect of pastoral responsibility because the pastors who serve as mentors to deacons exercise *episcopate*—pastoral supervision—of the deacons and also, thereby, expand their pastoral scope beyond what they can do by themselves.

One district president suggested that deacons trained within the district better understood the cultural environment and people than individuals who came from outside the district. Similarly, a mentor pastor indicated his belief that a deacon from his congregation would understand the church and could serve in his absence better than an ordained supply or vacancy pastor from elsewhere. Others believe that the Scriptures refer to an office of deacon in Philippians 1:1 and in 1 Timothy 3:8–13 and that the establishment or maintenance of such an office is needed.²¹ Moreover, the number of individuals who served as a licensed lay deacon and then went on to become

an ordained LCMS pastor, via colloquy or seminary programs, was emphasized in nearly every district visitation.²² Lastly, proponents of the district deacon training programs pointed out the inherent value of the study programs in themselves and emphasized the benefit of having specially trained laypeople available to help in various pastoral capacities in ordinary settings as well as during times of more extraordinary needs.

With the approval of about ten districts, congregations facing such challenges have appointed laymen to preach, baptize, and preside at the Lord's Table either in established congregations or in developing missions or church plants. Such districts have designed and implemented programs for training leaders in theology and pastoral practice in an attempt to prepare the lay workers. *Deacon* is the formal title for such workers, but other titles (e.g., "lay minister," "lay pastor," and simply "pastor") are also used, sometimes formally and other times informally.

Over time, the utilization of lay deacons has sometimes gone beyond the provisions of 1989 Res. 3-05B, which anticipated and endorsed the practice of laymen preaching and administering the Sacraments only in emergencies or exceptional circumstances. The majority of deacons serve in settings where there are significant, if not extreme, financial, geographic, or demographic challenges. However, there are also cases in which deacons preach and administer (both occasionally and as "vacancy pastors") even though ordained ministers—retired and/or active—are readily available to serve. In addition, some women graduates of deacon-training programs have served liturgically in ways that the Synod has formally discouraged and that has also created confusion and misunderstanding (see 1989 Res. 3-10; 1989 Res. 3-14).²³

As noted above, a central assumption of LLD programs has been the idea that the practice of a pastor supervising deacons who carry out pastoral functions, such as preaching and sacramental administration under his (the pastor's) authority, is a recovery of a New Testament emphasis on exercising "oversight." Therefore, the Task Force on Licensed Lay Deacons believes the matter of oversight must be addressed specifically.

The words *overseer*, *overseeing*, and *oversight* are translated from the ἐπίσκοπ- stem of noun and verb forms, usually in a form of the noun ἐπίσκοπος, "overseer." It is important to observe several things.

1. Words that are related to this ἐπίσκοπ- stem are *not* the main descriptors of the Office of the Holy Ministry, either of the officeholder or of his function. Holders of the office are described as ἐπίσκοποι only four times in the entire New Testament (Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7), and the verb ἐπισκέπτομαι is never used to describe the activity of the officeholder. Words related to this stem are *not* used of Jesus as He deals with His people (with the possible exception of Luke 19:44, which speaks of His "visitation" to Israel).
2. Much more frequent within this context are stems related to *shepherd*/*shepherding* (ποιμήν/ποιμαίνω) and *sheep/flock* (πρόβατα/ποίμιον/ποιμνή). These words, related to the office and its functions, occur at least 64 times (18 for "pastors" and their people, and 46 times for Jesus as He deals with His people—21 times in the Gospel of John alone).
3. Thus, the pressure of the linguistic usage of the New Testament is *not* in the direction of understanding men in the Office of the Holy Ministry as being and functioning principally as overseers. Rather, these men are seen as being and functioning principally as *shepherds*, men who personally tend, care for, and even give their lives for their sheep. Indeed, the people under the care of the holder of the Office of the Holy Ministry are never called "those overseen"; they are regularly called the "sheep" or the "flock."

4. Furthermore, what are overseen by "overseers" in the New Testament, when the noun is used, are *not* other leaders. Rather, it is the sheep themselves. This can be seen in Acts 20:28: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as *overseers*, to engage in *shepherding* (ποιμαίνειν, present infinitive) the church of God." *One oversees by acting as a shepherd among the people whom God has commended to one's charge, not by overseeing others doing the work of shepherding.* A corporate, delegation model is not at all in view.

The members of TF 4-06A want to address several false stereotypes that are sometimes heard in the Synod's debates about LLD programs. To be sure, any time there is debate and controversy, one may find "bad examples" on the "opposing side." But, in a time of debate, should we emphasize the worst of our opponent's behavior and exaggerate its significance, or should we put the best construction on those with whom we differ?

Therefore, we would first emphasize that the concerns underlying the establishment of district lay training programs are valid. Proponents of LLD training and implementation are not, in general, theologically cavalier or unconcerned with faithfulness to Scripture or subscription to the Confessions. Their overriding desire is that people in LCMS congregations would be able to hear the Gospel preached and receive the Sacraments of Christ. They are aware that the circumstances for rightly calling ministers in past times have dictated different approaches to the selection of pastors (Tr 70). There is little evidence that laymen serving as deacons are seeking to usurp authority or responsibility from pastors; rather, there is ample evidence that most simply wish to serve the church and willingly accept the need to do so under a pastor's supervision.

The task force also hastens to emphasize that those with theological concerns about the LLD programs are not, in general, doing so because they think mission and ministry is unimportant or that the congregations filling their pastoral needs with deacons have no real challenges. There is little evidence that pastors who raise concerns about LLD programs do so to "protect their turf" or otherwise to engage in clerical elitism. Rather, the emphasis on the part of those who question the programs is for fidelity to our biblical and confessional commitments and a desire to address the problems of underserved congregations and missions without compromise to those commitments. Those who question the LLD programs note that the practice of laymen serving as pastors without ordination, whether or not they are supervised by an ordained minister, is a recent innovation that has no historical substantiation.²⁴

We pray that such false perspectives about those on either "side" of the debates might be removed. Our Synod needs to move forward together with deep concern for fidelity to the Word of Christ as we confess it together and for faithfulness in the mission Christ has given to His Church.

How Is Rite Vocatus to Be Understood? (AC XIV)

Central to the theological debate regarding LLD practices is the understanding of AC XIV, referred to above. Since the Augsburg Confession was written in both German and Latin, both languages are translated in recent scholarly editions of the Book of Concord. A comparison of translations from German and Latin shows there is no difference in substance. The translation from German in the Kolb-Wengert (KW) edition reads: "Concerning church government it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call." The translation from the Latin reads: "Concerning church order they teach that no one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly

called.” The restriction within this article is the relevant point: “without a proper [public] call” is based on the German *ohn[e] ordentlich Beruf*, and “unless properly called” is based on the Latin phrase *nisi rite vocatus*.²⁵ Public ministry—preaching, teaching, and sacramental administration in and on behalf of the church—is restricted only to those with a proper call, or, in other words, to those properly called. So what does that phrase *rite vocatus* mean? What is a proper call?

While the question about the proper understanding of the phrase *rite vocatus* is, in large measure, a topic we must consider from within the realm of our *confessional* commitments, we should not ignore the *biblical* texts underpinning Article XIV. As confessional Lutherans, we subscribe the Confessions *because* they rightly express *Scripture’s* teaching. Thus, C. F. W. Walther properly grounded the Office of the Ministry not in custom or good order (as much as they may play a role), but in the Word of God. It is the Word that restricts those who should preach, even though the Word also affirms that every Christian is a priest (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10), that all Christians are “taught by God” (John 5:45), and that, as Luther explained, when any Christian is with those who do not know Christ “it is his duty to preach and to teach the gospel.” “In such a case a Christian looks with brotherly love at the need of the poor and perishing souls and does not wait until he is given a command or letter from a prince or bishop. For need breaks all laws and has none.”²⁶ There is no biblical restriction on sharing the faith in one’s daily vocation in the world.

In the Christian Church, however, “there is an office to teach, feed, and rule, which Christians by virtue of their general Christian calling do not possess.”²⁷ The texts are clear: Paul asks rhetorically whether all are apostles, prophets, or teachers in 1 Corinthians 12:29, knowing that the answer is no, for God Himself appoints (sets in place) different people in different offices for the well-being of the whole Church (1 Cor. 12:28).²⁸ Paul himself declared that he was “appointed” to his office as preacher, apostle, and teacher (1 Tim. 2:7, cp. 1:12).

This truth pervades the whole of Scripture. God, not man, calls each of us to proclaim the message of His redeeming love in Christ Jesus, yet God the Son also establishes this particular “office” in which He gives specific men to preach, teach, baptize, and commune His holy people. He called prophets in the Old Testament and then promised through them that He would give shepherds (pastors) also in His new covenant to “feed” His people “with knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3:15). The Lord Jesus Himself saw to the fulfillment of this promise when He called His apostles and commanded them to feed His sheep (John 21:15–17; cf. Matt. 10; 28:18–20; Luke 9:1–10; Mark 16:15; John 20:21–23). The apostles were unique as eyewitnesses, but not as appointed preachers—for the office of public preaching and teaching and sacramental administration would not end with them. Rather, they assured the growing Church that their pastors/elders/bishops (the name of the office varied) had been placed in their office by the Holy Spirit, not human decision, in order that God’s Church would be nurtured (Acts 20:28; cf. Eph. 4:11). Moreover, the apostles, who had been called directly (immediately called) by Christ Himself did not exalt themselves over those whom God later called and appointed through the Church (indirectly or mediately). Rather, Peter exhorts elders “as a fellow elder” (1 Pet. 5:1).²⁹

It should be clear, then, that this responsibility—the Office of the Public Ministry, as we are accustomed to refer to it in the LCMS—is not optional, but commanded. Walther emphasizes that in his Thesis III on the Ministry/Office; yet he immediately also reminds us that this vital office is not in opposition to the priesthood of believers or a sign of superior holiness, but one of service (Thesis IV). AC XIV stands on firm scriptural ground as it restricts the public preaching

and teaching of the Gospel and its sacramental administration to those who have been appointed to such duties.

How does that appointment—that right and proper public calling—take place? In a variety of ways. No one particular method of providing the Office of the Ministry has been followed either through the tradition of the Church catholic or in Lutheran tradition. What is vital is that the public ministry be filled in a way that is in keeping with the requirements of Scripture and the Confessions. The proper calling—*rite vocatus*—involves several aspects. The task force commends to the Synod the understanding of this phrase that was emphasized in the CTCR’s 2003 report *Theology and Practice of “the Divine Call.”*³⁰ The report’s focus is “placement into the office of the public ministry”—that is, the “divine call” or “call and ordination.”³¹ The report speaks of “the divinely established office referred to in Scripture as ‘shepherd,’ ‘elder,’ or ‘overseer’” or as “the office of the public ministry.”

After examining the scriptural evidence for the call into ministry, the report summarizes by noting that placement into the office of Word and Sacrament occurs in several different ways and that the texts that describe these methods provide guidance only inferentially. It also notes that the New Testament is less concerned with procedure than with the qualifications of ministers and the importance “for the church to know that the man who occupies the pastoral office has been placed there by God.”³² Prefatory to its examination of the Confessions, *Divine Call* notes: “In general, the Confessions stress two points: pastors are not self-appointed; and, bishops are not the exclusive ones who may ordain.”³³ The latter point is especially emphasized in the Treatise: “Philip Melanchthon’s treatise is a theological rationale for Lutherans to undertake the ordaining of their own pastors.”³⁴ Melanchthon also obliquely addresses the development of the diaconate as a step toward the Roman view of a necessary hierarchy in ministry. The report affirms Melanchthon’s view that, “regardless of their title (pastor, elder, teacher [doctor], preacher, minister, and occasionally bishop, though almost never priest), all ordained clergymen have the same basic authority to discharge the duties of their office (AC XXVIII, 8, 21; Tr 60–61, 74).”³⁵ Noting Melanchthon’s references to the rights of calling, choosing (or electing), and ordaining, *Divine Call* argues that, “taken together, the terms used by the Treatise constitute and explain the ‘rightly called’ (*rite vocatus*) of AC XIV.”³⁶ Further, *Divine Call* suggests how the three aspects of “rightly called” may be distinguished:

The “right of choosing” (*jus eligendi*) refers to the nomination and selection of an individual. The “right of calling” (*jus vocandi*) designates the actual request or call of the individual to serve. The “right of ordaining” (*jus ordinandi*) refers to the act by which one is placed into the public office of ministry.³⁷

Therefore, the confessional understanding of *rite vocatus* involves three elements: examination (or certification), call, and ordination. The examination identifies an individual who has been properly prepared in terms of doctrine and whose life will be in keeping with the office he is to hold. The call is the congregation’s affirmation that God has called this individual to serve them as their pastor. The ordination provides the means by which the wider church—the Synod, in our case—recognizes the examination and call of the individual and places him into the ministry of the church. Thus, the congregation’s call is the local affirmation of an individual’s ministry, and ordination is the transparochial affirmation of the same. So the CTCR said in 1981:

We stress the fact that ordination is the declaration of the whole confessional fellowship. In the end, a single congregation or an agency representing larger segments of the church does issue the call. Neverthe-

less, in a synod of congregations bound by a common confession and loyalty, good order demands that admission into the pastoral office or into its closely allied auxiliary offices is not the act of a single congregation or agency. Various ways can be found to establish this approval of the whole church. Presently the certification of suitability for the ministry by the faculty members who have taught the candidates and the assigning of first calls by the Council of Presidents is workable and does express the transparochial nature of the ministry.³⁸

Please note: how a church examines, calls, and ordains has been done in various ways through the ages. Our church has made determinations for how best to do these different things for the sake of good order. Examination takes place via seminary faculties or the colloquy process. Calls are issued, in most cases, by action of the congregation alone, acting to fill its pastoral vacancy. Ordination is conducted on behalf of the whole church by the District President or his representative after due examination and call. During the ordination, the calling congregation speaks on behalf of the whole church to receive the candidate as a duly called and ordained pastor.³⁹ *Rite vocatus* includes this whole process. None of these three aspects is negotiable or unnecessary, even though they do not occur simultaneously and they may be implemented in various ways.⁴⁰ Moreover, these three aspects are not wooden, nor are they understood legalistically. For example, as candidates for the ministry are being prepared (in the examination process) for call and ordination, they are required, as vicars (or “interns”), to preach, albeit under the supervision and authority of their supervising pastor.

Specifically, Why Ordination?

We have noted earlier Walther’s emphasis that the Office of the Ministry is not a position of superiority. It is not to be exalted over the office every Christian holds by virtue of Baptism. Luther was just as emphatic. Referring to the public ministers by the term “priest,” as was still current at his time, Luther writes: “Whoever does not preach the Word, though he was called by the church to do this very thing, is no priest at all, and that the sacrament of ordination can be nothing else than a certain rite by which the church chooses its preachers.”⁴¹ Walther is therefore following this understanding of ordination when he says of it: “The ordination of those who are called with the laying on of hands is not a divine institution but an apostolic, churchly order and only a solemn public confirmation of the call.”⁴²

Because of such statements in our tradition, some have questioned the importance of ordination. The practice of unordained men preaching and teaching publicly is often connected with this perspective, and such quotes from Luther and Walther are sometimes used to promote the service of lay preaching and sacramental administration. Why is ordination important, even if it is not a mandate from our Lord, but “an apostolic, churchly order and only a solemn public confirmation of the call”?

To answer this question, we need to look at the qualifications for pastors. The Pastoral Epistles summarize the qualities the church must look for in her pastoral servants.⁴³ Above all, they must be “above reproach” so as not to put obstacles in the way of the Gospel, and they must be “able to teach” so that they proclaim Law and Gospel clearly. Self-chosen good works quickly become idolatry.⁴⁴ Therefore, no one is able to certify himself or declare himself qualified for ministry, but the Church as the Bride of Christ is to put in place the structures necessary to assure herself that her ministers are qualified. No one should set himself up as pastor, so churches develop procedures by which pastors are called. We believe God calls, but through the congregation(s). And because our congregations are members of a

confessional fellowship, we seek to recognize in a public way through the participation of the wider church that a pastor is properly called.⁴⁵

Ordination is the public rite of the church, living in Christ, that proclaims openly all these elements.⁴⁶ Candidates for ordination must be examined or certified by the church (in our Synod, by one of the seminary faculties or by the Colloquy Committee) as “able to teach” and fit for pastoral ministry according 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9. Candidates for ordination must also be properly called—no one is ordained without a valid call. So our district presidents may ordain (or authorize the ordination of) only such men as have been properly certified (or examined) and rightly called.

The rite of ordination does not confer a special character or power on the person. It is also, as Walther emphasized, an apostolic custom and not a divine mandate. But such important qualifications of the practice should not lead us to assume it is unimportant or a mere formality. The Confessors never dispute the practice of ordination to the Holy Ministry, even while insisting that they have adopted a different manner of ordination because of the unwillingness of Roman bishops to ordain pastors for their churches (SC III10 [KW 323–24]; see also Ap XIV 1–3). In the Augsburg Confession, ordination is public recognition of the call by the wider church (beyond the individual congregation), testifying that the man is qualified and has been properly called to be a pastor. It is the call, we believe, that makes a man a pastor of a particular congregation. Ordination, as a rite, is not mandated by the Lord. However, the church is mandated to put a man “under orders” to Jesus in the Office of the Holy Ministry through the church’s right calling. Our Lord Jesus thereby puts a man into the office for His use. Therefore, because our congregations are part of a wider fellowship, we call only such men as are properly certified, and we seek the recognition of the wider church by ordaining (and publicly installing) them to office. We believe omitting any of these elements would be schismatic and contrary to the “catholicity”⁴⁷ of the church and the unity of our Synod fellowship. Why?

1. The rite of ordination publicly witnesses that a man is found by the church to be “able to teach” and fit for ministry and has been properly called to the office by the Lord through His church.
2. The rite of ordination extracts from the candidate for ordination a very serious vow, making clear for the man and to the congregation what the Lord through His church is charging him to be and to do. He is not to lord it over the flock, but to serve. He is not to make up his own message, but to proclaim what he has been given, according to Scripture and the Confessions.
3. In the rite of ordination, the church, by the Word of God and prayer, puts the man in office and makes clear that he is to be pastor, and that his task is the public (i.e., on behalf of all) administration of the Word and Sacraments.⁴⁸
4. In the rite of ordination, the congregation, on behalf of the whole church, receives the man as a minister of Word and Sacrament, and also, on behalf of the church, pledges itself to support the pastoral office with love, honor, and obedience in the Lord (when the pastor brings God’s Word), as well as with gifts and fervent prayers.

The practical purpose of ordination is to *make clear* to the people in both the congregation and the wider church that the man is set apart to be pastor, as well as to *make clear* to both the man and the people what he is to be and to do in their midst.

Confusion over Licensed Lay Deacons

With the adoption of 1989 Res. 3-05B, the Synod sought to bring some order to practices taking place unofficially.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, the result has been confusion and division, rather than order and harmony. The practice of licensing lay deacons to preach and teach and

preside for the Supper is, at its core, not clear. In an important paper considered by the systematic faculties of both our seminaries, Dr. Joel Okamoto concludes that “call and ordination are essential for conduct of the ministry. Ministers do things in the place of Christ. They forgive and retain sins. They judge doctrine. They administer the signs of God’s favor. They warn and admonish against sin and error. They exclude and include particular persons. In all these things they stand over against others, and so the question follows naturally: By what right? On whose authority? What is the sign of authority for ministers today? It is their call and ordination, which assure that they act by divine right and on the authority of Christ.”⁵⁰

In essence, licensed lay deacons are *locally* certified as “able to teach” rather than certified by the whole Synod fellowship. While there is a call of sorts by the congregation, when the church inducts a licensed lay deacon, it specifically does *not* place the man into the pastoral office. Yet the church is telling the man to go and to do pastoral work (albeit under supervision). The people see the man behaving as their pastor, yet they are not to call him pastor, but deacon.⁵¹

Although it is often noted that “oversight” (*episcopate*) is a pastoral responsibility and that at various times in history deacons have served under a pastor’s (or bishop’s) oversight, such practices have not been widespread in Lutheran tradition. Where the office of deacon has occurred, it has been defined and practiced with great variety and, most often, with its sole focus on serving the physical needs of believers. Moreover, the practice of licensing preachers has historically been condemned by Lutheran fathers (Walther, for example). Given such historical uncertainties, it is not surprising that the practice of licensing lay deacons to provide some pastoral responsibilities has led to confusion and strenuous debate rather than order and harmony (see above, pages 4ff.).

Our concern here has nothing to do with the power of the Word or the efficacy of the Sacraments. The Word of God is the Word of God, whoever speaks it. The Sacraments are sure and certain because of the Word and promise of Christ, not because of the character or position of the officiant (cp. AC VIII). Yet when the church tells a man to do pastoral work (i.e., to publicly administer Word and Sacrament) but does not recognize the man as a pastor, the church is not being clear (or fair!) to the man or to the people. This, we believe, is the real source of the unease in the Synod regarding the sending of licensed lay deacons to publicly preach, teach, and preside. This is not the fault of the licensed lay deacon or of the congregation simply seeking to provide for Word and Sacrament in its midst. Instead, it is the Synod itself that has allowed this unclear situation to continue. Therefore, it behooves the Synod to provide a path forward toward a more unified and unifying approach for everyone, faithful to the Word of God and our confessions—something more clearly consonant with AC XIV.

The task force recognizes that without agreement regarding the theological understanding of the ministry as it is taught in Holy Scripture and confessed in the Book of Concord, divisions within the Synod will remain over this particular issue and that such dissension and misunderstanding will continue to distract us from the missionary mandate of our Lord. Moreover, because the Lay Deacon programs are designed and administered by LCMS districts, the task force sought guidance and reactions from the Council of Presidents on several occasions. While various district presidents have expressed reservations about how to address various practical aspects of the proposals offered below, no one on the council has expressed any theological objections to the understanding of *rite vocatus* provided in the preceding sections. It is our prayer, then, that the Synod can move forward in its practice on the basis of a common theological

understanding of the need to rightly train, examine, call, and affirm the ministerial validity of those who will preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments in our congregations and missions.

The Role of Colloquy in the Synod

There are essentially two means by which a man can be certified for call, placement, and ordination into the *ministerium* of the LCMS.

1. He may be certified by one of our two seminary faculties through one of several degree or certificate programs offered by that seminary (MDiv, alternate route, SMP, EIIT, CHS, etc.).
2. He may be certified by the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry (consisting of the First Vice President as Chairman, one district president selected by the Council of Presidents, and the presidents of our two seminaries or their representatives).

Colloquy is from the Latin *colloquium*, meaning essentially “a conversation.” So, a man entering the ministry of the Synod by colloquy submits an application package through a district, the Colloquy Committee decides whether the man is eligible to proceed, and if the person qualifies, the Colloquy Committee invites him for an interview, a colloquy. On the basis of the application and the colloquy interview, the Colloquy Committee decides whether to certify the man, to decline the application, or to require the completion of further study. Further study might include a reading program, seminary classes, SMP classes, a vicarage, or various combinations of the same. As one might expect, colloquy is highly individualistic and can vary greatly, depending on the needs of the particular applicant. The goal, however, is always to ensure that the individual is “able to teach” and will think and act as a Lutheran pastor.

Who is eligible for colloquy? In addition to the general characteristics necessary for the pastoral office laid down in Scripture (see 1 Tim. 3:1–7; 4:1–16; 2 Tim. 4:1–5; Titus 1:5–9, etc.), there are three categories of individuals presently eligible to apply for colloquy:

1. Ordained men who are currently active pastors in good standing of another church body, and who have completed a recognized academic program leading to ordination
2. Men who have been members in good standing of a Missouri Synod parish for at least two years, who possess a Master of Divinity or equivalent from a recognized academic program leading to ordination
3. Licensed lay deacons of the Missouri Synod who have been serving in full Word and Sacrament ministry for at least ten years

All others, including LCMS commissioned ministers and lifelong LCMS members who have received the Master of Divinity degree from schools outside the LCMS, are directed to one of the seminaries for the “alternate route” program.⁵²

Though the details have varied through the years, the Missouri Synod has always admitted pastors to its *ministerium* by a colloquy of one form or another. The 1854 Constitution of the Synod states, “If pastors, candidates for the ministry, or schoolteachers apply for membership in Synod, who have previously not been members of recognized orthodox church bodies, they must first submit themselves to a *colloquy* by the examination commission or substitutes appointed by it.”⁵³ The constitution then called for two examination commissions to ensure that the applicants were “able to teach”—does the man think and act as a Lutheran pastor?⁵⁴

The path to ordination proposed below uses this time-honored process in a modified way to address the specific needs of lay deacons who have been licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry. The goal is to provide a means by which every congregation is served by a pastor, and every man whom we charge to do pastoral work—to administer Word and Sacrament on behalf of God’s people—is recognized by the wider church as a pastor.

***Basic Proposal Regarding the Current Service
of Licensed Lay Deacons***

Res. 4-06A charged the President of the Synod to appoint a task force to “develop a plan anchored in the Word, in consultation with licensed lay deacons and those who supervise and are served by them, to resolve questions about the service of licensed lay deacons serving congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with the Word and Sacraments of Christ.”⁵⁵ The present task force believes that the Synod, by such a plan, should provide a clear path forward to certify,⁵⁶ call, and ordain men presently serving as licensed lay deacons.⁵⁷

The priorities of the task force as it has met, prayed, and worked together are the following:

1. Remaining faithful to Scripture and the Confessions
2. Promoting and facilitating the mission of proclaiming the Gospel in our congregations and communities
3. Promoting greater concord within the LCMS
4. Promoting greater implementation of existing assets:
 - a. SMP
 - b. EIIT, CHS, Cross-cultural Ministry Center (CMC)
 - c. Multi-point ministries
 - d. Inactive pastors
 - e. District training programs for laity
5. Encouraging and facilitating increased lay involvement in the mission of the church, especially in evangelism

While the foregoing are not necessarily in order of priority, the task force believes it is necessary to say that the first two points mentioned should not be placed in conflict with each other. Without theological faithfulness, there is no clear missionary mandate. Without the work of mission—proclaiming the Gospel to the world in and outside of our churches—theology is hollow and the church is being unfaithful to Scripture and the Confessions.

The following proposal is designed to address both questions about the service of licensed lay deacons in keeping with 1989 Res. 3-05B and also to eliminate possible abuses of the resolution. It would eliminate, for example, two reported practices in particular, both of which are in violation of 1989 Res. 3-05B and existing Licensed Lay Deacon programs: first, the improper use of licensed lay deacons in congregations when pastors are serving or are readily available to serve and, second, the improper use of licensed lay deacons to fill pastoral vacancies at neighboring congregations where they are not licensed to serve. (Moreover, although this report’s task is to address concerns and controversy over licensed lay deacons, it should be added that the occasional practice of commissioned ministers—DCEs, DCOs, teachers, commissioned lay ministers, etc.—preaching or administering the Sacraments, filling vacancies, and so forth, rather than ordained ministers, is also illegitimate.⁵⁸)

The path forward outlined below is clearly meant to replace and make unnecessary in our Synod the practice of licensing lay deacons *for Word and Sacrament ministry*, which the Synod began to allow with the adoption of Res. 3-05B in 1989.⁵⁹ This proposal allows for an adequate transition period to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to avail themselves of this opportunity. However, there will be a *terminus ad quem*. In other words, there will need to be a date after which lay deacons will no longer be licensed by districts for Word and Sacrament ministry. The task force recommends that no new lay deacons be licensed to preach or administer the Sacraments after January 1, 2018.

A central theological concern of the task force is the biblical requirement that those who serve in the Office of Preaching (the

public ministry) must be able to teach the whole counsel of God (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:2, 24). This requirement, not mere custom, is the reason our churches have emphasized the most thorough preparation possible for pastors and has established seminaries. It is true that our seminaries provide a challenging residential program that is not always a realistic means of pastoral formation for every potential candidate, but it is also true that our Synod has provided very well-designed alternatives to residential programs that still maintain high standards of theological and personal preparation for the holy ministry that the Synod can endorse as a whole. Therefore, our task force is strongly recommending that, moving forward, such programs—namely, SMP, EIIT, CHS, CMC—be fully utilized to provide the best possible pastoral formation for individuals who may have in recent years sought to be licensed lay deacons instead.

These recommendations should not be misunderstood. The task force’s work is not in any way intended to demean or discount the commitment or the efforts of current lay deacons. Lay deacons have been humbly serving their Lord and His church, often without remuneration, to the full extent of their abilities and training. Such commitment deserves commendation and honor. Moreover, some deacons have surely attained a level of theological competence equal to seminary-trained pastors, just as surely as some seminary-trained pastors are of limited theological and practical competence. For these reasons, the task force recommends that all those licensed lay deacons who are presently serving as *de facto* pastors of congregations—regularly preaching and administering the Sacraments—should be eligible for a colloquy examination to judge their theological understanding, pastoral capabilities, and commitment to Scripture and the Confessions.

Just as the following recommendations are not intended to belittle the commitment of current licensed lay deacons, so also the task force does not intend to disparage in any way the value of the training programs designed by various districts. Such programs have provided significant benefit not only within given districts, but in the Synod as a whole, as witnessed by the fact that the ten-course competencies are the basis for admission into the SMP program and that several of the courses within the programs meet requirements for residential seminary admission. Whether the training programs were equipping deacons, other certified parish workers, or individuals who took classes on a case-by-case basis, they enabled individuals to grow in the Word of God and in an understanding of Lutheran doctrine and practice. For these reasons the task force wishes to retain the training programs and, especially, to emphasize the potential for them to serve in training and equipping laity for evangelism.

Recommendation 1: Colloquy for Licensed Lay Deacons

The task force recommends that those licensed lay deacons who are regularly preaching and administering the Sacraments be required to apply for a colloquy to examine their ability to teach and overall fitness for ministry. Upon certification by the Colloquy Committee, they will be called by the congregations where they have been serving, ordained into the Office of the Public Ministry, and placed on the roster of Specific Ministry Pastors.⁶⁰

What does this mean? How is this done? First, some general thoughts: of course, licensed lay deacons may always (and many do) apply to one of our seminaries to prepare for “alternate route” or Master of Divinity certification. Licensed lay deacons and others unable to leave their present situations are encouraged to prepare for ordination through the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program.

Specific ministry pastors are called and ordained pastors (*de jure divino*) but always work under the supervision of a “general pastor” in specific circumstances (*de jure humano*).

In those situations where licensed lay deacons have been used in the past, congregations and districts should use the seminary SMP program wherever possible. Recognizing, however, that completing the SMP program is not always possible or realistic, the task force submits this proposal to colloquize men onto the SMP roster. Since former licensed lay deacons who would be ordained under this recommendation already serve under full supervision,⁶¹ the practical dimensions of the service of these men will change very little. They will, however, be fully recognized and rostered as pastors of the LCMS and will serve without the prior restriction on their practice imposed by the LLD programs in which they were not to pronounce the absolution of the repentant.⁶²

Elements of the Colloquy Proposal

A. General Eligibility

This process is for those lay deacons licensed by districts for the administration of Word and Sacrament in congregations of the Synod who are presently functioning regularly in that role. The same standards of character and life necessary for all pastors shall apply also to these applicants. The policy manual of the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry states:

Applicants for colloquy must be male, men of good moral character who have been prepared for the pastoral ministry in some manner *apart from* the various routes leading to ordination existing within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. An applicant must “*be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil*” (1 Timothy 3:2–7; see also 4:1–16; 2 Timothy 4:1–5; Titus 1:5–9, etc.). The Colloquy Committee for Pastoral Ministry will, as it considers each applicant, be the final authority for determining eligibility according to these Biblical requirements.⁶³

Not every current licensed lay deacon will be eligible to apply for colloquy. For example, one district uses the term *deacon* for both men and women who have completed its training program, although that district’s policy does not allow any of its deacons to preach or administer the Sacraments, with only a single exception (a man who regularly preaches). Regular preaching is the critical aspect for eligibility. One criterion to apply for SMP colloquy should be that the individual regularly serves a congregation as the man who is chiefly responsible to preach and lead worship more than half of all Sundays for the past two or more years.⁶⁴ In addition, the congregation that is served by such a deacon should show that it has been and will likely continue to be unable to secure the services of a rostered pastor.

The task force is confident that most, if not all, of the licensed lay deacons who are serving in a pastoral capacity are teaching and preaching in keeping with Scripture and the Confessions. At the same time, the task force is not recommending or implying that all current licensed lay deacons are automatically qualified for ordination. The possibility that an applicant for SMP colloquy would be completely unable to meet the biblical requirements of being able to teach or above reproach cannot be ruled out. Similarly, it is possible that an applicant would be ineligible

for colloquy because of a persistent unwillingness to teach the Word of God in a way that is consistent with the LCMS’s confessional standards.

B. Application Process

1. The applicant shall authorize the district president to request a complete background check through “Protect My Ministry.” The applicant shall tender payment for all “Protect My Ministry” fees with the completed authorization form to the district in which application is being made (fees are established by each district). A copy of this report (minus the social security number) shall be provided as part of the application package.
2. The applicant shall complete the form “Application for Admission to the Colloquy Program for Specific Ministry Pastors” (a modified version of the regular application for colloquy). These specific elements are to be included with this application form:
 - a. A detailed description of the applicant’s current service as a lay deacon licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry
 - b. Three sermons, written or recorded
 - c. Demonstration of a thorough knowledge of Luther’s Small Catechism
 - d. Documentation that the applicant has passed the seminaries’ basic entry tests in the Old Testament and New Testament or equivalent (also a requirement for entering the seminary SMP program), available on each seminary’s website
 - e. Completion of an intensive course on the Lutheran approach to Scripture and doctrine offered regionally by the seminary faculties (see item E below)
3. The district president and applicant (and, if married, his wife) shall sign the application where indicated. The district president needs to indicate his strong support for the applicant to be placed in an SMP call to the congregation he is serving.
4. In addition to the information required to complete the application form, the applicant shall prepare an autobiographical statement including his experience as a licensed lay deacon.
5. The applicant shall arrange for written testimonials, sent directly to the district president, that assess the applicant’s Christian character and life, personality, abilities, and previous service (especially with regard to how he has conducted himself as a licensed lay deacon). These testimonials shall come from no fewer than three references who have known and observed the applicant for at least the two years immediately preceding his application. Applicants who are not US citizens will be required to provide proof of legal residency in the United States (and a work permit, if he will be paid).
6. In addition to the letter of endorsement from the district president, one of these testimonial letters must come from the circuit visitor of the circuit where the applicant has been serving as a licensed lay deacon, assessing his current and past service.
7. The congregation served by the licensed lay deacon shall prepare an official letter to be included in the application package, indicating their commitment to extend a call to the deacon once he is certified for call and placement. Placement in a call shall be by action of the Board of Assignments (the Council of Presidents) according to its normal procedures.
8. The district president shall arrange for an interview of the applicant with an interview committee within the district. The report of the interview committee is to include a detailed assessment of the applicant’s suitability and a recommendation whether the applicant should be declared qualified (or not) for a call as a “specific ministry pastor” in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod upon completion of the colloquy process. A written copy of this report shall be included in the application package.
9. The applicant shall arrange for transmission to the district president of official (original) transcripts from all colleges and seminaries he may have attended. The applicant also shall furnish evidence of earned

continuing education units (CEUs) and of other noncredit academic and professional experiences completed. The Colloquy Committee reserves the right to seek independent validation of credit.

10. The district president shall attach a cover letter to the application package that declares his strong endorsement and sponsorship of the applicant. The district president's letter must also give clear and cogent reasons why the colloquy applicant cannot enter the seminary alternate route or the seminary SMP program. The district president shall make sure all requested information has been provided and shall send the completed package with appropriate signatures to the First Vice-President of the Synod as chairman of the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry. The applicant (and, if married, his wife) and the sponsoring district president must sign this application form where indicated.

C. Expanded Colloquy Committee

According to the Bylaws of the Synod, the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry consists of four individuals—a representative of the Council of Presidents, the two seminary presidents (or their representatives), and the First Vice-President. A process for licensed lay deacons to enter the SMP roster by colloquy would require expanded colloquy interview committees. The task force proposes the creation of at least two colloquy interview committees (in addition to the regular Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry) specifically tasked with interviewing licensed lay deacon applicants for colloquy to the SMP roster. The membership of these two extra committees would include

- two additional district presidents selected by the Council of Presidents (district presidents emeriti would be eligible to serve), one for each committee;
- two additional seminary professors (normally the head of each seminary's SMP program to provide continuity; seminary professors emeriti would qualify); and
- two parish pastors who have experience with licensed lay deacons, appointed by the President of the Synod.⁶⁵

These additional Colloquy Committees appointed to work with the districts to colloquize licensed lay deacons to the SMP roster could meet in the parts of the country convenient to the deacons applying (e.g., not only St. Louis, but also in Portland, Irvine, etc.). Other ordained men should be asked to help with the interviews on an ad hoc basis (as is done now with the regular colloquy interview process). In fact, the task force believes this feature of our recommendations will be essential for understanding the context in which the colloquy applicants are working and the specific needs of the congregations these deacons presently serve. In other words, pastors who are more familiar with the cultures of a *specific* area should be involved in the certification process of the men from that area, as they are colloquized to the *Specific* Ministry Pastor roster. The process (including selection of the ad hoc assistants for the interviews) would still be generally overseen by the First Vice-President as chair of the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry, who would need to allocate time adequate to the task. Such oversight would help to assure transparency and approval.

Extensive revisions are needed to the Colloquy Policy Manual to reflect these changes. For instance, the current policy manual allows for application for colloquy by licensed lay deacons, but only after ten year's service in full responsibility for Word and Sacrament. The proposal outlined in this report *requires* all present licensed lay deacons, if they do not enter a seminary program, to undergo colloquy to be ordained and placed on the roster of specific ministry pastors.

D. Colloquy Interview

Each application, once received, would be reviewed by one of the special Colloquy Committees and, if acceptable, the applicant would be invited to an interview (these could take place at locations other than St. Louis). The interview committee would have authority to certify immediately; to certify while also requiring additional study after certification; to require further study before certification; to require further study with eventual reconsideration; or to decline to certify. Men who take the vow of ordination pledging faithfulness to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions must know what they are promising by that vow.

E. Theological Preparation, Continuing Education, and Ongoing Supervision

Because colloquy is based on individual capabilities and needs, some, and perhaps many, candidates will exhibit a fully acceptable level of theological competence and would then be immediately certified for congregational call, ordination, and rostering. It may also be that many other applicants for SMP colloquy will require further study to enable them to be "able to teach" at a basic level. At its discretion, the Colloquy Committee may require such study either prior to or after certification for ordination. To insure some uniformity of preparation and for the sake of efficiency, however, the task force proposes that the seminary faculties jointly prepare an intensive (one week) course for all SMP colloquy candidates,⁶⁶ taught by two professors (one from each seminary) and offered in geographic locales that make participation simple and viable. The course would be offered in a retreat setting and would focus on the Lutheran approach to Scripture and doctrine. This course may also be an aid to identifying areas of required future study.

Further study beyond such an intensive course should be individually determined and may be engaged under the guidance of a mentor (perhaps utilizing the establishment of a cohort of LLDs preparing for ordination), according to the determination of needs by the Colloquy Committee. *Moreover, after ordination, as specific ministry pastors, these colloquized men will continue to serve under a mentor for the duration of their ministry.* Gaps in the preparation of candidates may readily be filled by mentored readings based on the application and the interview. As an individualized process, the Colloquy Committee must endeavor to take into account the particular abilities, needs, attitudes and level of knowledge of each individual applicant. However, the mentored study requirements should not be arbitrary, and the task force proposes that the Colloquy Committee also develop standard reading courses for the applicants to work on as a form of continuing education with their mentors, utilizing basic resources (e.g., the entire Book of Concord, Koehler's *Summary of Christian Doctrine*, Luther's 1535 Lectures on Galatians (AE 26–27), Walther's *Law and Gospel*, *The Lutheran Difference*, in-depth studies of biblical books, *Christian Dogmatics*). Sponsoring district presidents should recommend necessary mentors and be kept informed as to the progress made by the applicant, sharing that progress in regular reports to the Synod's Colloquy Committee.

It must be recognized that while SMP colloquy applicants must meet a minimum level of understanding to make with integrity the promises required by the ordination vow, these men most likely will not possess the same level of knowledge as a general pastor. Of course, it is also true that not all seminary-trained pastors are equal in their ability to teach and that competent ministry involves more than intellectual or doctrinal understanding. The task force fully expects that the godly men who are serving as deacons today will serve with

commitment and competence as they join and enhance the *ministerium* of the LCMS. The goal of pastoral formation and preparation of every type is always to enable a man to be “able to teach” and to serve faithfully as a Lutheran pastor in the ministry to which he has been called.

F. Limitations on Colloquized Specific Ministry Clergy

Only those male deacons who are age 55 or older will ordinarily be admitted to the SMP colloquy program.⁶⁷ Colloquized specific ministry pastors will be either bi-vocational or retired from another profession. Pastors colloquized as SMP will be limited to the place to which they were initially called. If they wish to move, they will need to enter the alternate route at one of our seminaries. Deacons under the age of 55 who are currently serving on a regular basis in preaching and officiating over the Sacraments and are not eligible for colloquy will be required to enter the SMP program or another seminary-provided alternate route.

G. Transition Period

Certainly an adequate transition period will be needed. Congregations, licensed lay deacons, and district presidents will need time to digest and implement the details of the plan outlined herein. The task force proposes that the Synod adopt the following schedule to enable this to take place:

1. No new deacons will be licensed by district presidents for Word and Sacrament ministry after January 1, 2018.
2. Lay deacons licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry prior to July 1, 2017, will have until July 1, 2018, to do one of the following:
 - a. Apply to one of the seminaries for an “alternate route” or the Master of Divinity degree.
 - b. Apply to one of the seminaries for the regular SMP program.
 - c. Apply to the Colloquy Committee for admission to the SMP roster by colloquy in the manner herein described.
 - d. Allow his license to lapse and discontinue service as a licensed lay deacon by July 1, 2018.
3. Deacons licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry between July 1, 2017, and January 1, 2018, will be required to enter the full seminary SMP program or to apply to the “alternate route” or Master of Divinity program.
4. Lay deacons licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry who have applied for colloquy to the SMP roster prior to July 1, 2018, shall continue to serve under their current district licensure until the colloquy process is complete and certification is given by the Colloquy Committee.

The task force cautions those who may believe that there should be an immediate cessation of Licensed Lay Deacon programs and the current practice, in some places, of having deacons serving congregations in a pastoral capacity. Concern for practice that is fully consistent with doctrine is always appropriate, but it is also necessary to recognize that teaching and “convincing” require time. It is most important that there be a theological consensus on this matter within our Synod that is scriptural and confessional. Only on that basis can real progress toward common practices be achieved. While this report seeks to lay forth a measured, responsible plan to address concerns about the practice of licensing lay deacons based on biblical truth, no Synod plan, proposal, or resolution can take the place of joint study of God’s Word and our confessions with respectful and prayerful discussions that enable us to achieve genuine agreement and appropriate practices (1 Cor. 1:10).

H. Certification, Call, and Placement

Men certified by the special Colloquy Committee for the Specific Ministry Pastor roster will be called by their congregation and placed in that call by the Council of Presidents in the normal manner. Then, to the joy of these men, their congregations, and the wider church, these pastors will be ordained, blessed by the gifts given through the laying on of hands (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6), committed by vow to their sacred responsibilities, and assured of the prayers and support of their congregation.

I. General Comments Regarding Further Education and Certification

Individuals colloquized as specific ministry pastors are strongly encouraged to attend all circuit and district conferences, thus engaging in continuing education. It is also incumbent on the Synod to provide opportunities for continuing education for pastors who are part-time and working other jobs. Distance-learning opportunities may be helpful here (e.g., iTunes U at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis). Should the applicant wish, a path to further education and certification through the seminary programs must be provided (SMP and MDiv). Men colloquized to the SMP roster should be able at some point to apply at least to the normal SMP route and, if academically qualified, to the seminary for alternate route or MDiv to be a “general pastor.” Continuing education in some form is strongly recommended for all pastors, but should be required of men colloquized to the SMP roster, the content determined by their supervising pastor in consultation with the district president.

Process for the Future

The task force recognizes that congregations and missions will continue to experience the challenges we have identified (financial, geographic, and demographic), and the Synod must address the need to provide the ministry of Word and Sacrament in such circumstances. There will always be a need for men to serve part-time, under supervision of a “general pastor,” for small, out-of-the-way places. In such cases, the seminary SMP programs should be the normal means (beyond July 1, 2018) by which the church raises up and prepares pastors “on site.”

However, the Synod has always recognized the existence of difficult and exceptional cases. Other solutions may also be explored. Perhaps it may be desirable for the Synod to provide an ongoing means for a limited number of individuals to be colloquized to the SMP roster of pastors in difficult cases (once the present pool of licensed lay deacons has been brought through the colloquy process). Certainly, there will be new questions and challenging circumstances will continue to arise. What will a small, remote congregation do at the time of the retirement of a colloquized specific ministry pastor who has served them for years? What mechanism will provide for their needs if they remain unable to call a full-time pastor or a seminary-trained specific ministry pastor? Will a locally trained (i.e., trained in the district) leader be able to be colloquized to the SMP roster? Some questions are beyond the purview of this task force and will need to be answered in the future. For example, the task force leaves open such questions as whether there may arise special situations of an extreme nature that require expeditious approaches in order to authorize a man to preach and/or administer the Sacraments to a group that cannot be served for the foreseeable future by a called and ordained minister.⁶⁸ However, this principle should always apply: If we ask a man to go and do pastoral work, we should make him a pastor, certified as “able to teach” in a manner appropriate to the situation,

of good character (“above reproach”), properly called, pledged to Scripture and the Confessions, set apart to be a pastor, affirmed by the congregation’s call and the ordination of the wider church, and thus making clear to him and to his people what he is to be and do. That is, he should in some public, mutually agreeable manner be examined for fitness, called by a congregation, and ordained to the Office of the Ministry.

Recommendation 2:

Further Utilization of SMP Program with Financial Support

The task force recommends that the Synod’s SMP program be fully utilized, since it has been developed as an approach to theological education especially for those settings where finances and/or geography are obstacles to preparation. Synod must ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any eligible candidate from participating in the SMP program.

Recommendation 3:

Further Utilization of Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT), Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS), and Cross-cultural Ministry Center (CMC)

The task force recommends that the Synod’s EIIT, CHS, and CMC be fully utilized to supply training for pastors in cross-cultural settings, since they have been developed to provide a means for theological education especially for those from various cultures and backgrounds. Synod must ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any eligible candidate from participating in these programs.

Recommendations 2 and 3 are strong endorsements of current Synod programs designed to address the need for pastoral training in atypical circumstances. The SMP program is intended to address such problems as education for second-career (and especially older) ministry candidates, distance education for individuals who already play a critical role in a congregation’s ministry, and other circumstances that prevent or inhibit resident seminary education. The various approaches to pastoral training referred to in Recommendation 3 are LCMS attempts to address the special needs and circumstances of mission and church planting in an increasingly diverse America. The church needs each one of these means to raise up pastors for the future.

The task force realizes that the use of the SMP program and the Synod’s programs for training pastors from other ethnic backgrounds have sometimes presented financial obstacles that prevent utilization in the circumstances for which they were created. Theological education is costly, whether residential or via distance education. Recommendations 2 and 3 indicate the need for the LCMS to address financial challenges. Inherent in these recommendations are two types of financial challenge.

First is the cost of the recommended intensive course in a retreat setting proposed above in item E of Recommendation 1. As noted, colloquy candidates may benefit from a formative course taught by seminary professors, and such intensive courses around the country will involve some expense. The task force proposes that Synod’s Pastoral Education Department bear *at least* 50 percent of the cost for these courses and that the remaining 50 percent be funded by a combination of the resources of the district, the congregation, and the individual candidate.⁶⁹

Further mentored courses and readings that are required by the Colloquy Committee would also involve expenses for materials and an honorarium for the mentor. Such costs should be standardized and funded according to the same breakdown as the intensive course.

Second, going forward, it should be anticipated that there will continue to be candidates for the ministry for whom SMP or other specialized nonresidential training approaches are needed but for whom the costs of the programs make them financially unfeasible or impossible. In such instances, there will be cases in which financial assistance is required. In such cases, the district president should be responsible for determining the level of need and for requesting assistance from the Synod’s Pastoral Education Department.⁷⁰

Meeting Needs Addressed by Licensed Lay Deacons through Other Means

The Synod has utilized its clergy and technology in various ways to meet some of the challenges we have identified. Among these are the establishment of multi-point parishes and wider use of technological innovation.

Recommendation 4: Multi-Point Ministries

The task force recommends that the districts of the Synod vigorously encourage and facilitate the establishment of multi-point parishes where that is geographically and financially feasible and when individual congregations can no longer provide for a pastor.

Several districts that have numerous congregations facing the problems of distance and economics have promoted multi-point parishes. That is, of course, an old idea—one that is very familiar to the Synod from its past and has been and continues to be used in both US and world Lutheranism. Indeed, multi-point ministry is a means of addressing pastoral needs that is being utilized with greater frequency today than a generation ago in the LCMS. Some districts have been intent to guide small congregations to form multi-point ministries. In other settings, larger congregations are establishing the functional equivalent of multi-point parishes by means of “satellite” churches or churches with more than one campus or facility. In still other settings, there are examples for a group of individual congregations served by a team of two pastors who are jointly called to serve the entire group of churches. While some form or another of multi-point ministry may not always be feasible, it is certainly one way that congregations may be served in an ongoing basis by a pastor. A frequent obstacle is the understandable reluctance of a congregation that enjoyed the full-time attention of its own individual pastor to accept that given present realities such a new approach—a multi-point arrangement with another congregation—is now the best means of providing pastoral service. Given the tendency for geographically isolated and financially limited congregations to be small, the personal pastoral needs of two or more congregations may be no greater or even less than those of a larger congregation that is able to support an individual pastor on its own.

Recommendation 5:

Utilization of Current Technology and Past Approaches

In some cases, despite the best efforts of congregations, a pastor will be unavailable. In various ways, congregations of the Synod currently make use of technology to aid in ministry. In such instances, technological resources (e.g., live-streaming a sermon or service) may be a helpful aid, coupled with lay-led readings and prayers. Other temporary aids may include rescheduling service times to allow an area pastor to serve, laymen reading sermons prepared for the congregation by a pastor, or laity leading services of readings, prayers, and praise.

Corollaries to multi-point ministry may also expand an individual pastor’s ministerial “reach.” Another alternative, given the

growing possibilities of technology, is to employ live-streaming videos of sermons prepared earlier or other resources to provide access to preaching. Several LCMS districts incorporate the use of live-streaming videos into multi-point ministries, which is particularly beneficial when the two (or more) congregations in a multi-point arrangement are long distances apart and meet at the same time. A single pastor can serve in a revolving way week by week in terms of his physical presence and his ability to offer the Sacrament of the Altar, while preaching in each congregation each week.

Emergencies and other unforeseen circumstances will occur that will make it impossible for a pastor to serve his congregation on a given Sunday. The time-honored approach to such occasions has been to designate a man (typically an elder or perhaps another called auxiliary minister) to conduct Matins or another service from the hymnal so that the congregation has opportunity to hear the Word of God, to pray together, and to sing praise (1 Tim. 4:4–5). A proactive approach to such occasional needs is important. On most occasions, a sermon can be prepared by the pastor to be read in the service. Of course, another way to address pastoral absence is for congregations to reschedule their service times, if that allows a neighboring pastor to be available.

In all such cases where it is simply impossible for a pastor to preach or conduct worship, care should be taken so that an exceptional circumstance does not create confusion or become a precedent for errant practices. Though “emergency knows no law,”⁷¹ it should not be an excuse for disorder. Thus, even in such difficult circumstances, every attempt should be made to address the problem in an orderly way that is consonant with Scripture and does not cause offense or misunderstanding. For example, while an emergency pastoral absence may necessitate having a layman lead a service of the Word and read a sermon prepared by the pastor, our congregations should heed the Synod’s counsel for women not to exercise liturgical leadership.⁷² Moreover, it would be good to distinguish between an emergency and ongoing challenges. A pastor’s illness and unavoidable absence on a given Sunday presents an emergency need. But when there will be no pastor for the foreseeable future, a thoughtfully considered, theologically orthodox answer, rather than “emergency” remedies, is needed.

Recommendation 6: Re-engaging Inactive Pastors

The task force recommends that the Synod and Districts recruit and encourage eligible inactive-status pastors (retirees as well as others eligible for calls) to be available for service in congregations and missions of the Synod on a full- or part-time basis or bi-vocationally, particularly in those congregations facing financial, geographic, and demographic challenges.

In terms of the ratio of rostered LCMS pastors to its laity, it might initially appear to be easy to provide rostered pastors for all Synod congregations. That assumption, however, founders on the fact that many rostered pastors are on inactive status due to retirement or for other reasons that make it impractical for them to be candidates for calls. Other pastors are inactive because they are available to serve in only a particular locale. Also, LCMS pastors are not evenly located around the country, so that some areas have far more pastors than there are positions of service while other regions have significantly fewer pastors available for supply preaching or who are willing to consider a call to congregations in their area (this immobility may be due to a host of reasons).

Despite these obstacles, many inactive pastors do wish to serve and are willing to move to new places to do so. Given the increasing longevity of Americans, including called church workers, many

retirees may also need to supplement their income after retirement. Service to small churches may be one way to do that. A more concerted effort to utilize our inactive pastors is in order. Many retired pastors retain the desire to serve insofar as they are able. A widespread general plea to retirees to consider the needs facing our church in the future and the potential for them to help address some of those needs is in order.

Training and Engaging Laity in the Work of Evangelism

As noted earlier, the task force is aware of the many significant ways that district-sponsored lay training programs have equipped and motivated individuals to serve the church. Lay deacon training is most notable among the reasons such schools were established, but their benefits go far beyond training for licensed lay deacons.

Recommendation 7:

Retention and Affirmation of District Lay-Training Programs

District lay-training programs are to be commended with thanksgiving for the many willing lay servants who seek further theological education and desire to serve in various capacities in their congregations. The task force recommends that a major emphasis in lay-training programs be placed on the role of evangelist and the task of outreach in an increasingly diverse and challenging United States.

While specific programs designed to license laymen to preach and administer the Sacraments will end, the need to offer biblical and theological training for laity will continue. Individuals are involved in current district training programs often simply for personal edification. Others are preparing for SMP admission. Still others intend to provide service in specific areas of congregational life, such as Christian education, visitation, nursing home ministries, children and family ministries, evangelism, and administration. Such training programs are needed and are to be encouraged.

Recommendations 1–3 indicate that training for the purpose of licensing lay deacons per se will no longer continue. These recommendations should not be interpreted as criticisms of efforts to increase theological training for laity, however. Lay leadership training is important for the future health of our Synod. First of all, pastors are always called to teach, to instruct, and to catechize their members in the Word of God. The true doctrine (teaching) of Christ must be *taught*, as Paul instructed Timothy: “If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. . . . Command and teach these things. . . . Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. . . . 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. 4:6, 11, 13, 16).

The purpose of Synod and its districts is to support congregations and pastors in their God-given work. To this end, many districts have implemented lay leadership training efforts on a district level. This is beneficial for the church and should be encouraged. District lay training programs provide a supplement to the pastor’s instruction so that people hear the Word of God from another source. Districts, for instance, often bring together pastors and elders for specific training, teaching, conversation, and instruction in the role of elders in our congregations. Lay leadership training for congregational chairmen, secretaries, and treasurers should be a blessing to all. The varied resources of a group of congregations can be put to service for all in the efforts to help mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, etc., in

their vocations. Doing this through the districts in an organized fashion can be a great blessing to both congregation and pastor.

Various districts also prepare laypeople to serve in roles that assist the pastor in a variety of ways, particularly in evangelistic (witness) and mercy (diaconal) work. These efforts sponsored by districts are an important means of equipping the priesthood of the baptized for their service in Christ's name and are to be encouraged wherever possible.

Such courses of study on the district level can provide a foundation or an impetus for some to go on to the even more in-depth study required of men entering an SMP program or the usual seminary routes to the pastoral office. District study courses often are and can continue to be the first steps to prepare men to enter an SMP program.

All this is beneficial and should be encouraged wherever districts have the resources for it. Synod has said as much in various resolutions over the years. Most notably, 2004 Res. 5-09 affirmed "the role of the laity in expanding the mission of the church and recognize[d] the need further to equip laypersons for mission work."⁷³ More recently, the Synod in 2013 resolved that "every pastor and congregation be encouraged to participate in the study of God's Word and of the Lutheran Confessions and Lutheran Apologetics in defense of their Christian faith."⁷⁴ The same 2013 Convention also directed "the Office of National Mission to work aggressively to increase awareness of its services and resources for the Synod's congregations, institutions, schools, and professional church workers for training and equipping all God's people, members, and families for joyful evangelization, sharing with confidence and courage their hope in Christ—namely, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in His name."⁷⁵

However, the focus of this training, if it is truly to serve the mission of the church to bring the Gospel to lost people, ought not be on training laypeople to do pastoral work (as though that were the only "real" ministry). Rather, a more important *focus should be in helping all the baptized to evangelize—witnessing to Christ and sharing the Christian faith within their vocation*.⁷⁶ Though we charge pastors in the rite of ordination to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5), the best evangelists are often laypeople gifted and hopefully trained to tell the Good News of Jesus wherever their vocations take them. Evangelists or witnesses⁷⁷ within all walks of life are essential for reaching the lost and for the church to grow. Pastors, of course, need to be out in the community making connections with people, always ready to apply God's Word of Law and Gospel. Lay evangelists, however, are able to go far more places to bring the Word of Jesus to far more people.

District lay leadership training efforts are a great blessing when they help people, especially lay leaders in congregations, understand the true mission of the church and grow as evangelists always "prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). We do not need to make laypeople think they are doing "real" ministry only when they are doing things the pastor does, but we do need lay evangelists, lay leaders, lay men and women who can teach others the Word of God within their vocation, men and women who serve in appropriate leadership positions in the congregation, but most important, baptized people of God who speak the Good News of Jesus at every opportunity God gives them in their vocation. This is where district programs can be most helpful in the broader mission of the church. Equipping the baptized people of God to fulfill their vocation as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that [we] may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called [us] out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9) is an essential need that district lay training programs can help to address.

Therefore, while training for the specific role of "licensed lay deacon" will no longer continue, the task force instead recommends that a major emphasis in lay training programs be placed on the role of evangelist and the task of outreach in the increasingly diverse and challenging world of the US. Such programs need to be highlighted, strengthened, and encouraged. The task force is *not* recommending that, at least at this point, a synodically recognized "office of evangelist" be established. Rather, this recommendation intends to emphasize the evangelistic or witnessing *task* within the everyday vocations of all LCMS laity (see also Recommendation 8).⁷⁸

Recommendation 8:

Identification and Training of Laity for the Role of Evangelist

In conjunction with Recommendation 7, the task force recommends that congregations and districts be encouraged to identify individuals for special training in and attention to evangelism. As individuals are identified, we encourage congregations and districts to facilitate their training both through existing Synod efforts and programs and in special, intensive training through district lay programs.

This report has noted that three reasons have been advanced since the mid-1980s for licensed lay deacons to serve in the LCMS. First, there is the shortage of ordained pastors available to serve in certain locales. Second is the reality that some congregations, particularly those in rural and urban areas, are unable to financially support a full-time pastor and have difficulty finding even temporary supply pastors. And third, few LCMS pastors are equipped for mission outreach and church planting in urban settings as well as among various ethnic, racial, and immigrant groups where there is also limited financial resources to support a full-time ordained pastor.

This portion of the report is focused on this third reason for employing the services of licensed lay deacons and offers both an observation and recommendation for the use of the New Testament *role* of evangelists in the twenty-first century. There are growing and significant opportunities in the United States for outreach by Christians with the saving actions Jesus proclaimed in word and deed.

On May 12, 2015, the Pew Research Center posted its new Religious Landscape Study, the first complete revision since an earlier 2007 study.⁷⁹ The study draws on a massive sample size of more than 35,000 Americans to offer a detailed look at the current religious composition of US adults. The following are five key findings from that study, depicting the state of the current mission field in the United States.

1. In 2007, 78.4% of U.S. adults identified with Christian groups, such as Protestants and Catholics⁸⁰ ... ; seven years later, that percentage has fallen to 70.6%. Accounting for overall population growth in that period, that means there are roughly 173 million Christian adults in the U.S. today, down from about 178 million in 2007.
2. Within Christianity, the biggest declines have been in the mainline Protestant tradition and among Catholics. Mainline Protestants represented 14.7% of U.S. adults in 2014, down from 18.1% in 2007, while the Catholic share of the population fell to 20.8% from 23.9% over the same period. By comparison, evangelical Protestants have been more stable, declining only about 1 percentage point between 2007 and 2014 (from 26.3% to 25.4%).
3. The decline of Christians in the U.S. has corresponded with the continued rise in the share of Americans with no religious affiliation (religious "nones"). People who self-identify as atheists or agnostics (about 7% of all U.S. adults), as well as those who say their religion is "nothing in particular," now account for a combined 22.8% of U.S. adults—up from 16.1% in 2007. The growth of the "nones" has been powered in part by religious switching. Nearly one-in-five U.S. adults

(18%) were raised as Christians or members of some other religion, but now say they have no religious affiliation.

4. There are clear differences between certain demographic groups when it comes to religious affiliation. For example, younger adults are far more likely than older Americans to identify as religious “nones,” men are more likely than women to be religiously unaffiliated, and whites are more likely than blacks or Hispanics to identify as “non-religious.” But despite these differences, the major trends seen in American religion since 2007—the decline of Christians and rise of the “nones”—have occurred in some form across many demographic groups, including men and women, older and younger Americans, people with different levels of education, and different races and ethnicities.
5. The share of Americans who identify with non-Christian faiths, such as Islam and Hinduism, has grown modestly in recent years, from 4.7% in 2007 to 5.9% in 2014. Muslims now account for 0.9% of the U.S. adult population (up from 0.4% in the 2007 Landscape Study), while Hindus make up 0.7% of U.S. adults (up from 0.4% in 2007).

Indeed, this is an era ripe for Christians to be always prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks them for a reason for the hope that is in them, yet to do so with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15). The pastors who serve LCMS congregations are well-trained to preach, teach, properly administer the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and offer sound biblical, pastoral care. They typically find themselves occupied with the demands of caring and providing pastoral leadership for a congregation of active and inactive church members. They are also committed to outreach to the lost with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ into the mission fields in which they and their church members live. But the demand for outreach activity frequently outpaces the supply of energy and time that most pastors possess. There is truly a need for those who can serve in the fertile mission fields of the United States.

Therefore, Task Force 4-06A not only considered the theology of the public ministry and its practice in the LCMS, but also examined the possibilities for expanding mission reach by considering the role of evangelists (or witnesses) in the New Testament with an eye to their role in the twenty-first century.

The New Testament of God’s Word references “evangelists” three times. In Acts 21:8, we learn of Philip the “evangelist”: “On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.” He is the same Philip who left Jerusalem in haste earlier due to the persecution of Christians described in Acts 8:4–6 and preached Christ in Samaria:

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did.

Indeed, Philip also went down from Jerusalem to Gaza in Acts 8:26–40 at the direction of an angel of the Lord to encounter the Ethiopian eunuch and interpret the prophecy of Isaiah so that the Holy Spirit could lead the Ethiopian to ask for Christian Baptism.

In his Second Letter to Timothy, Paul was inspired by the Spirit to call upon Timothy to do the work of an evangelist: “As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (4:5).

It is also Paul the apostle who, in his Letter to the Ephesians (4:11), described the Lord’s gifts to His Church, including evangelists: “And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.”

It has been observed that the term *evangelist* has circulated in the Church’s vocabulary for nearly 2,000 years. That acquaintance, as is

often the case, has made the word popular but left it without precise definition.⁸¹ The question has been asked, “Is ‘evangelist’ an office or a gift in the New Testament?” While the biblical record may not detail a specific office of evangelist, it does describe the work of an evangelist and even encourages it.

This being said, it is the purpose of this section of the task force’s report to consider the need for the development of the role of “evangelists” in the LCMS. There is a great opportunity for evangelists and evangelism by congregational members who can be trained to team with the ordained and commissioned church workers of LCMS for intentional and targeted outreach among specific people groups with the saving and powerful Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Even as Solomon was inspired to observe that “there is nothing new under the sun,” (Eccl. 1:9), the recognition of such opportunities is not new in the LCMS. The first president of the LCMS, Rev. Dr. C. F. W. Walther, preached a sermon in 1842 in which he proclaimed,

Thus, my dear ones, you see: the office of Preacher or Caretaker of souls has not been instituted so that no one else is responsible for teaching or the care of souls. No, the whole congregation is to be a holy people, a royal priesthood. Each Christian should bear the needs of the soul of his neighbor in his heart and assist in the advance of the salvific Gospel (*in the lives*) of men so that the kingdom of Satan in the world is destroyed and the Kingdom of God expanded. Oh, how differently things would look; how much greater and more wonderful would be the blessing of the Word of God, if each Christian recognized his holy calling and administered his royal priesthood. With that in mind the Apostle cries to the Corinthians, “*Strive to love. Be zealous for the spiritual gifts, but primarily for the gift of prophesying Christ’s message of salvation.*” [The German imperative is plural, denoting all of the people.]⁸²

Walther’s preaching is not surprising in light of the biblical reality that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was spread by apostles (Acts 6) as well as by God’s people of various vocations due to the persecution of the Jerusalem Christians (Acts 8). Michael Green noted in his *Evangelism in the Early Church*:

One of the most striking features in evangelism in the early days was the people who engaged in it. Communicating the faith was not regarded as the preserve of the very zealous or of the officially designated evangelist. Evangelism was the prerogative and the duty of every church member. We have seen apostles and wandering prophets, nobles and paupers, intellectuals and fishermen all taking part enthusiastically in this the primary task committed by Christ to his Church. The ordinary people of the Church saw it as their job: Christianity was supremely a lay movement, spread by informal missionaries. The clergy of the Church saw it as their responsibility, too: bishops and presbyters, together with doctors of the Church like Origen and Clement, and philosophers like Justin and Tatian, saw the propagation of the gospel as their prime concern.⁸³

Green further related this observation from the Early Church through its first, second, and third centuries to this twenty-first century with a challenge:

Unless there is a transformation of contemporary church life so that once again the task of evangelism is something which is seen as incumbent on every baptized Christian, and is backed up by a quality of living which outshines the best that unbelief can muster, we are unlikely to make much headway through techniques of evangelism. People will not believe that Christians have good news to share until they find that bishops and bakers, university professors and housewives, bus drivers and street corner preachers are all alike keen to pass it on, however different their methods may be. And they will continue to believe that the Church is an introverted society composed of ‘respectable’ people and bent on its own preservation until they see in church groupings and individual Christians the caring, the joy, the fellowship, the self-sacrifice and the openness which marked the early Church at its best.⁸⁴

As the LCMS once again examines the various ways that people serve in ministry, it is a prime opportunity to consider the engagement of the baptized, ordained, and commissioned of the LCMS in God's mission of bringing salvation to the world through Jesus Christ. It is noteworthy that Lutheran church bodies in East Africa, such as Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, and South Sudan, each utilize evangelists to advance the mission of spreading the Spirit-powered truth of the Gospel to awaken the hearts of people to rely on Christ and Christ alone for forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. It is not unusual for such unpaid evangelists to receive training to teach the basic biblical tenets of the Christian faith and demonstrate the gifts of the Spirit for Christian living and witness. It is also not uncommon for them to be assigned by pastors to specific communities for the spreading of the Gospel so that new congregations can be gathered and eventually call their own pastor.

The task force observes that such a focus on evangelism could be of great value for LCMS congregations and pastors in their efforts to advance the Gospel in the current United States mission field. The task force recommends that men and women who are members of LCMS congregations be identified by their congregations and pastors to be trained. This training can include how to engage in Christian witness conversations within the vocations to which God has called them. It can also include teaching the Christian faith as well as assisting a gathering group to become a potential church start under the supervision of the pastor. Such individuals would not preach in formal worship settings.⁸⁵ However, they would converse, teach, lead Bible studies, and offer meditations prepared from Scriptures with pastoral supervision and organize a group for Christian mission to start a church.

The task force recommends that the LCMS explore in depth how other Lutheran church bodies are selecting, training, and supervising such voluntary evangelism servants. The task force further recommends that the training be created so that there are LCMS standards established for all LCMS districts. This could possibly be accomplished through the LCMS Office of National Mission, working with the Concordia University System. Basic training in outreach conversations, outreach teaching, and organizing could be delivered online through the various Concordias with the individual district lay leadership programs providing specific outreach training for specific people groups and cultures in their particular mission fields. Lutheran Hour Ministries outreach resources could also become very useful.

It is suggested that those who train be examined and approved by their congregation and its pastor and placed into accountability to the congregation and its pastor for assignment to specific mission fields and people groups in their local area. It is also suggested that they be known as evangelist assistants to the pastor and be publicly recognized as such in their congregations. Continuing education and ongoing congregational approval would need to be developed.

Conclusion

The LCMS has for too long experienced conflict and polarization over the matter of AC XIV and the service of laymen in the Office of Preaching. The Holy Spirit's appeal through the inspired apostle Paul is His plea also to us: "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).

Can we not agree that our Confessions remind us that the Office of the Ministry and the Royal Priesthood stand together in a complementary relationship, but also not one without distinction? The Lord of the Church has given ministers to His Church so that the Church may be served faithfully and competently. Those who preach and

administer Christ's gifts must be examined in their personal life and in their ability to teach rightly. They are not to be imposed on congregations, but freely chosen by the flock that will be served by them. Yet, because the church is not to be a sect living in willing isolation, its pastors and their commitment to the truth are also affirmed by the wider church, represented by fellow pastors and those who have oversight of their teaching and life. Examination by the church's teachers, local call, ordination/installation—these aspects of the holy ministry deserve our uniform agreement, for by such means Christ appoints His ministers, even though the "how" of pastoral training and preparation may exhibit significant variety.

The Synod needs to affirm clearly that all the men who are given the task of the public administration of Word and Sacrament are actually placed in the office of pastor. Certification (examination) as "able to teach," call, and ordination are of one piece and serve to communicate clearly to the man and to the congregation what he is to be and to do as pastor. Specific ministry pastors are fully pastors (*de jure divino*) but under supervision with limitations (*de jure humano*). We believe the approach outlined regarding lay deacons and the recommendation to give concerted attention to training laity as evangelists will provide for greater unity and a more common approach in our beloved Synod.

These are high standards—and necessarily so. Yet they also present practical problems in some cases. Competent, committed laborers are worthy of their hire, but what of congregations too poor or small to afford to provide the necessary means required? What of congregations that can find no one to heed their call to "Come over ... and help us" (Acts 16:9) because they are in areas of the country or parts of cities that are unattractive or threatening? What of congregations or missions that need a pastor who can serve in a specific language and cultural milieu? The Synod needs to respond to the needs of congregations in specialized circumstances in a manner consonant with our confession, but it must respond nonetheless. Specialized training is required not only now, but even more so in the future. Pastors must be equipped for and committed to serve among the poor, in challenging urban and rural settings, and cross-culturally, both in our residential programs and by other means. Commitment and, yes, sacrifice, are required of congregations, individual pastors, and district and Synod representatives and officials. Faithfulness to Christ's missionary call requires concerted attention to this need, with the Synod, its schools, and its districts working together in unity to address it.

At the same time, for the Synod to be faithful to the mission opportunities before us, we dare not suppose that our pastors will be the sole solution. Rather, the Gospel call to an unconverted America is a task that, in many ways, has been and always will be accomplished first through the laity—as royal priests serving in their daily vocations at home, at work, and in society. By faithful lives, mothers and fathers bring their children to Baptism and nurture them at home. Living faithfully at work, we shine a light that brings glory to God. In their daily witness, men and women speak of the reason for the faith, hope, and love that are present in their lives. By their willing service as members of the Body of Christ in a local congregation and its work, laypeople lead and strengthen their fellowship in countless ways. As the Church in Africa and China and many other places shows so well, royal priests can be powerful evangelists, with the potential to study God's Word and pray together with family and friends and acquaintances, and—according to the good and gracious will of the Holy Spirit—eventually to gather together saints who become a congregation, served and strengthened by a called and ordained pastor.

This is a worthy vision for our Synod, one that we can and should share. It is a vision that can be the basis for unity and concord, not division or distrust.

Appendix A													
2014 LCMS District Report on Licensed Lay Deacons													
DISTRICT	Rpt Date	Autonomous regular W/S	Autonomous regular W	Supervised regular W/S	Supervised regular W	Supervised P/T W/S	Supervised P/T W	Supervised reg non W/S	Supervised P/T non W/S	Totals by District	X-cult	Surv.	REGION
Atlantic	14-Mar	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	85	88	15	1	E-SE
California-Nevada-Hawaii	15-Apr	1	0	12	0	4	1	0	0	18	5	10	W-SW
Central Illinois	21-Mar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Central
Eastern	17-Mar	0	5	0	0	0	2	1	0	8	4	7	E-SE
English	8-Apr	7	1	3	0	1	1	0	0	13	3	10	English
Florida-Georgia	12-Mar	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	4	0	1	E-SE
Indiana	15-Apr	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	Central
Iowa East	16-Apr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Great Lakes
Iowa West	13-Mar	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	5	2	0	Great Plains
Kansas	26-Mar	0	0	5	0	13	23	10	11	62	3	5	Central
Michigan	27-Mar	2	0	8	0	33	0	0	4	47	2	2	Great Lakes
Mid-South	16-Apr	0	0	10	3	6	9	2	2	32	1	9	Central
Minnesota North	12-Mar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Great Plains
Minnesota South	23-Apr	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	3	2	Great Plains
Missouri	12-Mar	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	3	Central
Montana	12-Mar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Great Plains
Nebraska	12-Mar	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	6	1	0	Great Plains
New England	18-Mar	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	E-SE
New Jersey	14-Mar	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	0	6	0	1	E-SE
North Dakota	13-Mar	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	Great Plains
North Wisconsin	15-Apr	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	2	Great Lakes
Northern Illinois	14-Mar	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	Great Lakes
Northwest	17-Mar	0	0	19	0	52	1	1	0	73	4	25	W-SW
Ohio	21-Apr	0	0	2	1	4	0	0	0	7	1	2	E-SE
Oklahoma	16-Apr	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	Central
Pacific Southwest	12-Mar	8	0	12	1	0	0	10	56	87	10	10	W-SW
Rocky Mountain	16-Apr	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	3	0	1	W-SW
SELC	13-Mar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	SELC
South Dakota	12-Mar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Great Plains
South Wisconsin	15-Apr	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	Great Lakes
Southeastern	24-Apr	4	4	3	3	3	3	0	0	20	0	3	E-SE
Southern	17-Apr	0	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	6	4	6	E-SE
Southern Illinois	14-Mar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Central
Texas	10-Apr	12	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	18	6	12	W-SW
Wyoming	12-Mar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Great Plains
Totals for LLD activities		37	18	83	11	129	53	31	163	525	67	115	

Notes:

•Missouri District--LLDs serve not only as supervised P/T providers of W/S ministry, but also as P/T providers of other diaconal tasks. The survey does not distinguish between those who serve in such ways, which may therefore have produced some double counting, although that is uncertain.

•Nebraska District--One case under "Supervised reg non W/S" is not a licensed deacon.

•South Wisconsin District--One of the deacons serves a deaf ministry.

Notes re Appendix A

1. The preceding chart shows the results of a March 2014 survey of District Licensed Lay Deacons conducted by the task force. The survey was designed to mirror previous surveys, particularly a 2009 survey but also one in 2012. It was sent to district presidents, who responded either directly or through a staff member by the date indicated in the second column.
2. The survey's goal of mirroring previous surveys is evident in the third to tenth columns, which exactly mirrored those surveys by categorizing the sort of work conducted by LLDs in terms of "autonomous" or "supervised," "regular" or "part-time" (P/T), and "Word and Sacrament" (W/S) or "Word" (W) only or neither Word nor Sacrament (non W/S). So,
 - a. The third column ("Autonomous Regular W/S") describes LLDs who *regularly* serve, with minimal supervision (autonomous) and provide *both* preaching and the administration of the Sacraments (W/S).
 - b. The fourth column ("Autonomous Regular W") describes LLDs who *regularly* serve, with minimal supervision (autonomous), but provide *only* preaching (W) and not the administration of the Sacraments.
 - c. The fifth column ("Supervised Regular W/S") describes LLDs who *regularly* serve, under supervision, and provide *both* preaching and the administration of the Sacraments (W/S).
 - d. The sixth column ("Supervised Regular W") describes LLDs who *regularly* serve, under supervision, but provide *only* preaching (W) and not the administration of the Sacraments.
 - e. The seventh column ("Supervised P/T W/S") describes LLDs who *occasionally* serve (P/T), under supervision, and, when they do, provide *both* preaching and the administration of the Sacraments (W/S).
 - f. The eighth column ("Supervised P/T W") describes LLDs who *occasionally* serve (P/T), under supervision, but, when they do, provide *only* preaching (W) and not the administration of the Sacraments.
 - g. The ninth column ("Supervised reg non W/S") describes LLDs who *regularly* (reg) serve, under supervision, but neither preach nor administer the Sacraments (non W/S)—thus, while they are categorized by the District as a Licensed Lay Deacon, they are not, in fact, serving as a *licensed* preacher or in sacramental administration.
 - h. The tenth column ("Supervised P/T non W/S") describes LLDs who *occasionally* (P/T) serve, under supervision, but neither preach nor administer the Sacraments (non W/S)—thus, while they are categorized by the District as a Licensed Lay Deacon, they are not, in fact, serving as a *licensed* preacher or in sacramental administration.
3. A follow-up survey of district presidents in May 2014 asked two additional questions:
 - a. The first question asked how many of the congregations or ministries served by an LLD were cross-cultural in their main focus or purpose (headed "X-cult" for cross-cultural).
 - b. The second question asked the district president's opinion on how many congregations currently served by an LLD would be unable to survive without the services of the LLD. The results of this question are indicated in the thirteenth column (headed "Surv." for Survival).

Appendix B

Proposed track for current LLDs toward ordained and rostered status via SMP colloquy process (see "Elements of the Colloquy Proposal" for specific details):

1. LLD candidates for SMP colloquy shall meet two initial criteria: (1) having served in preaching or preaching and sacramental administration for two or more Sundays each month over the past two years or more and (2) being 55 years of age or older.
2. LLD candidates for SMP colloquy shall complete the application for colloquy process.
3. LLD candidates for SMP colloquy shall complete the course on the Lutheran approach to Scripture and doctrine that will be offered regionally.⁸⁶
4. The expanded Colloquy Committee shall schedule interviews within the region for eligible candidates.
5. The Colloquy Committee shall make a determination regarding each individual LLD applicant either to
 - a. approve immediately;
 - b. approve immediately with mandatory mentor-study requirements to follow;
 - c. postpone approval pending completion of coursework or mentor-study;
 - d. require additional study followed by reconsideration of the candidate; or
 - e. decline to approve.
6. If the candidate, assisted by his congregation and district, is unable to afford the full cost for the seminary faculties' course on the Lutheran approach to Scripture and doctrine or for ongoing expenses for mentor-study and potential coursework, he has the option to apply to the LCMS Pastoral Education Department, seeking a grant to cover up to 50 percent of the costs (additional aid would be at the discretion of the Pastoral Education Department). (Adequate funds exist to meet this commitment from the Synod. The current level of financial support for existing LLD training can be transferred to assist in colloquy-related expenses as needed.)

Toward the future—supplying pastors in the face of geographic, financial, and demographic challenges:

1. As congregations recognize that they are unlikely at present or in the not-too-distant future to be able to fill their pastoral needs with a full-time pastor (as determined by the congregation itself or by their district), they are encouraged to seek the counsel of the district regarding possible approaches to provide pastoral care.
2. The first recourse should be prayerfully to explore time-honored means of filling the need, such as multi-point arrangements or other part-time or dual-career forms of service by currently rostered pastors.
3. Another course of action may be to identify from their midst a man (or men) of "good repute" who is (are) "full of faith and the Holy Spirit" and ask him (them) to give prayerful consideration to gain the necessary training to serve pastorally (perhaps through residential seminary training, or via a program such as SMP or EIIT). (Such identification would mirror the current approach toward LLD training and may include initial course work on a local level to meet requirements for admission to seminary programs.)
4. Where funding obstacles exist for those who wish to enter SMP or another nonresidential track of pastoral education, the candidate has the option to apply to the LCMS Pastoral Education Department, seeking a grant based on individual need after seeking support from congregation and district.

Notes

1. Though Ephesians 4 uses the aorist tense, it is not merely referring to what Christ did in the past. He who ascended continues to give ministers to His church.

2. In this report the term “Office of Preaching” is used with the same meaning as “Office of the Holy Ministry” or “Office of the Public Ministry.”

3. John N. Collins argues that the men of Acts 6 received apostolic appointment to *minister at the tables* and *not to wait on tables*. That is, Collins argues that the “deacons” of Acts 6 were the next generation of ministers for evangelizing among the Greeks. See *Are All Christians Ministers* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 36–40. While remaining neutral about this particular point, what is evident is that both Stephen and Philip were adjudged to be “full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5) and, by means of the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6), receive apostolic affirmation for ministry that includes evangelism (see Acts 21:8).

4. ESV, v. 22. The participle of ἐπιστηρίζω means “to strengthen or establish”; while παρακαλέω refers to “exhorting,” “urging,” or “encouraging” here. Both terms identify an effect of the preaching of the Word in Acts (see also 15:32; 15:41; 16:39; 18:23; 19:31).

5. While the details of method of the appointment are not explicitly provided, it is worth noting that the verb implies some sort of vote or raising of the hands whereby in church after church the men appointed as elders received not only the endorsement of Paul and Barnabas, but of the churches. (BDAG defines the verb χειροτονέω as “choose (or elect) by raising hands” and “appoint.”)

6. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 40. (KW)

7. KW, 42.

8. Such ways have included individual instruction according to an “apprenticeship” model and streamlined programs such as those Löhe designed for *Nothelfer*. Various levels of schooling exist for training pastors in international Lutheranism, including seminary-level training and countless less ambitious programs.

9. There may be circumstances where very small congregations may need to consider merging with a nearby church or sharing a pastor with another congregation (see Recommendation 4), but that does not diminish the reality that many small congregations are struggling to provide pastoral care. Given overall LCMS demographics, it seems certain that such circumstances will only increase in the future.

10. Although the term “ministry” (*diakonia*) is occasionally used in a general sense as service, in this context the word is used in the narrow sense to refer to the office of the called and ordained servant of the Word and its responsibility to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments.

11. 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), cf. Part Two: Thesis I, 161–76 for Walther’s discussion of the distinction between the priesthood of believers and the pastoral office. 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), which has Part Two: Thesis I on 151–66. Later theses focus on the divine institution of the ministry, its necessity, character, authority, and responsibilities.

12. KW, 46.

13. Letter of appointment to the study committee from President Ralph Bohlmann. Quoted in unpublished CTRC Staff report, “1989 Resolution 3-05B” (February 16, 2006), 2.

14. Ibid.

15. LCMS *Convention Workbook: Reports and Overtures* (1989), 69.

16. Ibid., 70. The explicit rationale for restricting deacons from “the personal pronouncement of the absolution as it pertains to church discipline and possible excommunication” stems from the resolution’s perspective that deacons “do not hold the office of public ministry” and that this function could always be provided by “those who hold the office of public ministry” (Res. 3-05B; 1989 *Convention Proceedings*, 113).

17. The 1992 Convention resolved to establish a committee to study questions such as this, but an amendment to address the specific matter of an office of permanent deacon was defeated (see 1992 Res. 3-07A, 1992 *Convention Proceedings*, 115).

18. 2001 Res. 3-08B, “To Address Needs and Opportunities for Pastoral Ministry in Specialized Situations,” in LCMS 2001 *Convention Proceedings*, 138–39.

19. LCMS 2004 *Convention Proceedings*, 143.

20. Not all those who have completed district diaconal training programs are deacons or licensed to preach. Some assist congregations in other ways and, often, are referred to as parish assistants or other titles. The Atlantic District refers to all its graduates as deacons, but in almost every case, the deacons do not preach or administer the Sacraments (only one man does so at present).

21. It is certainly the case that the Bible refers to deacons; however, there is no indication within the texts regarding the service that deacons provide. They are associated with bishops (“overseers” or ἐπίσκοποι), respectable and reputable, and clear about the faith, but beyond that there is nothing about what the “office” implies or involves. For that reason, it is not surprising that deacons are not a constant in church history and that their role varies dramatically in different times and places. John Collins simply says “it is unlikely that this section of 1 Timothy can provide any more precise idea of the diaconate” (*Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1990], 238). None of this denies that the church is free to have or not have an office of deacon, but the definition of that office would be a matter of human authority, not divine authority, and it should not create confusion about the necessity of the one Office of Preaching.

22. Without questioning this assertion, it should be noted that the task force is unaware of any data that indicates how many men have gone on to be ordained under the auspices of seminary training or colloquy.

23. The task force has no basis to judge how widespread are the practices identified in this paragraph. It has no authority or responsibility for ecclesiastical supervision and has not discovered these examples via any “investigation.” In every case, the practices have been reported by deacons or mentors.

24. Some have suggested that references to the office of deacon in the history of the broader Church and in Lutheran churches (e.g., AC XXIII 10; XXIV 37) are evidence of such a practice. In fact, however, deacons during the Reformation-era Lutheran churches—and at many other points in Church tradition—were often part of the ordained clergy, though of a lesser rank (comparable to an assistant pastor today). Such deacons were not considered laymen. However, in other Reformation settings, “deacon” referred to unpaid laymen who took care of the poor and supervised the common chest. See Martin Krarup, *Ordination in Wittenberg* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 97–100.

25. KW 46–47. Cp. BKS 69. The Tappert edition reads, for the German, “without a regular call” and, for the Latin, “unless he is regularly called.” See Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 36. The Bente English translation from *The Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), reads “unless he be regularly called.” *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2005), while based on Bente, translates the phrase as “a rightly ordered call” (65).

26. AE 39:310.

27. C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Office*, Thesis I on the Office, 152.

28. The Greek verb τίθημι, used in verse 28, means “to establish something” or “to appoint someone.”

29. References are largely from *Church and Office*, 168.
30. Online at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcsm&id=410>; abbreviated as Divine Call.
31. *Ibid.*, 5.
32. *Ibid.*, 10.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, 12. Note well: the rationale is for Lutherans to ordain, not to dispense with ordination, something they insisted they did not want. See Ap XIV and the section that follows.
35. *Ibid.*, 13.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, 14. It should be noted, then, that the term *call* is being used in a twofold manner. In AC XIV, “called” is used to refer to an entire, threefold process of placing a man into the Public Office of the Ministry. The reference to a “right of calling” is a more narrow designation of the specific congregational call to an eligible candidate who is or will be ordained. On this understanding of the term *call* that can apply both to an individual congregation’s decision and also to the call *process* of the wider church, see also CTCR, *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, Nomenclature* (1981), which says on page 30: “The term ‘call’ should be used for those who have specifically been equipped to perform certain ecclesiastical functions and have made a commitment to dedicate their lives to that service unless or until God directs them to other callings. The term ‘call’ should not be used where such commitment is lacking, and those who serve the church other than under a call should be referred to simply as ‘lay workers.’ Furthermore, in a synodical form of church fellowship and congregational interdependence, those who are ‘called’ must be under the supervision of the whole church.”
38. *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, Nomenclature* (1981), 30. Emphasis added.
39. *LSB Agenda*, Rite of Ordination, 167.
40. Apology XIV 1 in the Book of Concord makes it evident that ordination was an aspect of *rite vocatus*. Every English version refers to “canonical ordination” as something the reformers fully support, even as they condemn the Roman church for preventing them from maintaining ordination in the usual manner. See KW, 222–23; also the Tappert translation: “With the proviso that we employ canonical ordination, they [the authors of the Roman Confutation] accept Article XIV, where we say that no one should be allowed to administer the Word and the sacraments in the church unless he is duly called.” Furthermore, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, second edition (Paul McCain et al., eds.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), comments in its introduction to Art. XIV: “Here Melancthon affirms Lutheranism’s desire to maintain whatever best contributes to good order, peace and harmony in the Church. Therefore, Lutherans have insisted on a rightly ordered call and ordination for those who will serve the Church as ministers of Word and Sacrament.”
41. AE 36:113.
42. *Church and Office*, Thesis VI, 209.
43. See 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9; see also 2 Timothy 2:15.
44. See AC XV and Ap XV.
45. It is certainly true that if the wider church does not make it possible to provide pastors, then a congregation has every right to act on its own to appoint a minister from among themselves. Because Rome would not ordain pastors for Reformation churches, this became a central point in the Treatise and in Luther.
46. See an excellent essay by Joel P. Okamoto, “The Office of the Holy Ministry,” in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 70 (2006): 97–111. This paper was presented at two joint meetings of the systematics departments of both LCMS seminaries and represents a consensus of these departments on the subject. It also appeared in *Concordia Journal*, published by the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. A significant point in the essay is that the ministry requires and receives its necessary authority only from Jesus.
47. “Catholicity” here refers not to the *Roman* Catholic Church, but “catholic” in the sense of the universal Church, found wherever the Gospel is proclaimed and the Sacraments administered.
48. Other Scriptures cited regarding ordination include 1 Timothy 4:14 (“Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you”) and 2 Timothy 1:6 (“Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands”). What is the gift imparted by the apostolic custom of the laying on of hands? Is it the Spirit, with gifts for pastoral work? Is it the office itself? Our church has been reticent to say more than the text, but it is clear that something is given. Perhaps the best understanding is that through the whole process of examination, call, and ordination, the office of pastor is entrusted to an individual not to lift him above the people but to charge him humbly to serve in the stead of Christ. The risen Lord has given “the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11).
49. At that point, it was estimated that approximately 135 “lay ministers” were “serving in the Synod in an ongoing Word and Sacrament ministry without the benefit of synodical guidelines for their service” (1989 Res. 3-05B, 1989 *Convention Proceedings*, 111).
50. Okamoto, 110f.
51. Those who serve on Synod’s Colloquy Committee report that when they ask licensed lay deacons what the people of the congregation they serve call them, the response is often “They call me pastor.” This indicates that laity recognize the Office of the Ministry, even when an individual has not been placed into it in a public manner.
52. Policy Manual of the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry, p. 6; see www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=1106.
53. Quoted in *Moving Frontiers*, Carl S. Meyer, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 152.
54. The 1854 constitution lists the requirements for the examinations: “The examinations shall be both oral and written. Written work is to be: a sermon on an assigned text; an essay on a dogmatical and church-historical topic; and finally a biography and a trustworthy character testimonial. The oral examination is conducted in the following subjects: Bible knowledge and Scripture interpretation; Christian doctrine; knowledge of the Symbolical Books and of the teachings of erring church bodies; church history, especially Reformation history; and practical care of souls; likewise the candidate has to deliver the sermon he handed in, and a catechization. All this, as previously noted, is done publicly. Above all, the examiners are to inquire whether the candidate has a thorough understanding of the right distinction between Law and Gospel (2 Timothy 2:15), also whether he is apt to teach, [and] also if he is sound and firm in the true confession.” *Ibid.*, 155.
55. 2013 *Convention Proceedings*, 132.
56. In this document, the terms *certify* and *examine* are used synonymously.
57. The Synod will also do well to recognize those things called for by 1989 Res. 3-05B it did *not* do; for example, conferences for leaders involved in training deacons, a clear distinction between locally trained workers and Certified Church Workers—Lay, deacons were considered a temporary solution in special circumstances, and clear bylaws were to be written to cover (and perhaps roster) licensed lay deacons.
58. It should be noted that, according to the distinction between the Office of the Public Ministry and auxiliary offices, no commissioned ministry office includes the work of public preaching and sacramental administration, even though every commissioned minister is a minister of the Word.
59. This does *not* address or restrict the training or the work of congregational deacons who assist their churches and pastors in other roles such as human care, liturgy, evangelism, assimilation, and catechesis and Christian education.
60. See LCMS 2013 *Handbook* Bylaw 2.13.1.
61. LCMS 2013 *Handbook* Bylaw 2.13.1.

62. While allowing licensed lay deacons to preach and to preside for the Lord's Supper, 1989 Res. 3-05B also stated: "The administration of the Office of the Keys by means of the personal pronouncement of the absolution as it pertains to church discipline, and possible excommunication, ought not be carried out by those who do not hold the office of public ministry, since this can always be provided for on behalf of the congregation by those who hold the office of public ministry" (1989 *Convention Proceedings*, 113).

63. LCMS Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry, *Policy Manual*, 4f.

64. This does not directly address the question of the status of current LLDs who serve *occasionally* as preachers or in administering the Sacraments. Such individuals who wish to serve in the preaching office are urged to consider seminary or, where appropriate, an application to SMP or EIIT.

65. If additional Colloquy Committees are established, then each new committee would be established by this same formula.

66. Exceptions to the attendance requirement may be made at the discretion of the chairman of the Colloquy Committee.

67. Any age restriction is somewhat arbitrary. Age 55 was chosen here with the idea that, if the time required to finish an SMP colloquy is one to two years, the man might expect to have approximately 10 to 12 years of service. Exceptions regarding age will be approved at the sole discretion of the Colloquy Committee at the recommendation of the sponsoring district president.

68. Such questions might involve such circumstances as an immigrant group that has already gathered, has "a preacher," and wishes to be a ministry of the LCMS or an isolated community that continues to go unserved by a rostered pastor despite the best efforts of the congregation, district, and Synod.

69. Any exception to the funding model would be at the discretion of the Synod's Pastoral Education Department. Synod financial resources adequate to provide such assistance are available.

70. Such assistance from Synod's Pastoral Education Department would not generally exceed 50 percent of the need.

71. Luther, "Sermon on John 3" (AE 22:338). Luther is never reckless with this dictum, however. Rather, he protested vigorously against those who accused him of abolishing the ministry or confusing it with the priesthood of believers. "You also lie that I have made all laymen bishops, priests, and spiritual in such a way that they may exercise the office without a call. But, as godly as you are, you conceal the fact that I added that no one should undertake this office without a call unless it be an extreme emergency" ("Answer to the Hyperchristian, Hyperspiritual, and Hyperlearned Book by Goat Emser in Leipzig—Including Some Thoughts Concerning His Companion, the Fool Murner," AE 32:174).

72. See 1989 Res. 3-10 and also CTRC *Review of 2005 Task Force Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices* (2014), at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=3286>.

73. 2004 *Convention Proceedings*, 143. It should be noted, however, that the Synod did not truly follow through on the last resolved of the resolution in question: "Resolved, That for the sake of good order, the Council of Presidents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the new Board for Pastoral Education with the guidance of the seminary faculties develop a standardized core curriculum for District lay-training programs and coordinate a national listing of participants."

74. 2013 *Convention Proceedings*, Res. 1-09A, 103

75. 2013 *Convention Proceedings*, Res. 1-05A, 101.

76. The Synod's Witness and Outreach Ministry has developed "A Simple Way," a tool for training laity in sharing their faith. It would be an effective centerpiece for training in evangelism or witnessing in District programs or lay-training schools.

77. In this report, we are using the term *evangelize* and its cognates for every form of sharing the faith with others. The terms are not used in contradistinction from words such as *witness* or *outreach*.

78. It should be noted that the Synod does have a recognized auxiliary office, Director of Christian Outreach (DCO), that might be understood as akin to an office of evangelist. Moreover, the task force recognizes that it may, at some point, be advisable to establish a rostered Synod office of "evangelist" *de jure humano*. That would, of course, involve careful consideration of both theological and practical matters, such as the current DCO program. It should not, however, impact the vital work of witnessing or evangelism within one's everyday vocations.

79. The survey was conducted between June 4 and September 30, 2014. It is available online in an interactive version: Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life, *America's Changing Religious Landscape: Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Continue to Grow* (May 12, 2015), <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>. For the printable PDF version, see <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/05/RLS-05-08-full-report.pdf>.

80. The inclusion by Pew Research of groups that have split off from classical Christian teaching and openly deny trinitarian dogma, such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, reflects the approach of the Pew Study and not the task force understanding of Christianity.

81. Tom Lyon, "The Office of Evangelist in the New Testament," *WRS Journal*, vol. 2 (August 1995), 18–20.

82. C. F. W. Walther, "Holy Desire and Duty of All Christians to Lead Souls to Christ." Published in Walther's sermon collection *Gnadenjahr. Predigten über die Evangelien des Kirchenjahrs* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1891). Translated by Bruce Cameron for *Missio Apostolica*, May 1998 (vol 6, no. 1), 10.

83. Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 380–81.

84. *Ibid*.

85. Of course, the word *preach* can be used in different ways. Anyone speaking the Gospel to others may be said to be preaching in a sense for that person is proclaiming Christ, and *preaching* and *proclaiming* may be used synonymously. However, the word *preach* in common usage refers not to individuals sharing the faith individually or even in a small-group discussion or study session, but to the proclamation that takes place in a gathering of the church for worship. In common usage then, the evangelistic work the task force is envisioning is not preaching but is a form of sharing the Gospel for both clergy and laity, male and female, young and old.

86. Depending on the needs of candidates, as determined by the colloquy interview process, a fuller program of ongoing distance education courses may be designed by the seminaries for LLD candidates. Assistance for the costs for such a study would also be available as needed.

VII. FAQs on Task Force Report and Recommendations

The Task Force on Licensed Lay Deacons (2013 Res. 4-06A) has received feedback through a variety of sources over the past four months since it released its report to the Synod. Individuals, deacons, supervising pastors, congregation members, district officials, and others have communicated many different reactions: agreement, gratitude, disagreement, dismay, and many helpful questions and suggestions. We want to express our appreciation to all those who have shared their perspectives with us. To encourage further thoughtful conversation about the matter of licensed lay deacons (LLDs), we have created the following FAQs. Some of the questions are direct quotations from correspondence; others are attempts to capture ideas and questions with brevity and accuracy. Additional reactions may be shared with the task force in care of its chairman, Rev. Larry M. Vogel, associate executive director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations at larry.vogel@lcms.org.

General/Theological Questions

Q1. The report refers to the “transparochial” or “whole church” dimension of the office of preaching (or, as we often refer to it, the Office of the Public Ministry). Why is this an issue with LLDs?

A. Because the office of preaching and administering the Sacraments (the public ministry) belongs to the whole church, it is and has always had a transparochial dimension that should not be ignored. Whatever one thinks of ordination, the laying on of hands by fellow pastors testifies to the fact that the public ministry does not simply belong to a given local congregation (or even a district since those from outside are invited to participate).

Moreover, the transparochial dimension of the office of preaching is also seen in the training, examination, and authorizing of pastoral candidates. Thus, each seminary is an institution of the church at large, whose board of regents (BOR) is elected by the church at large (not simply by the district in which that seminary resides), and whose BOR contains representatives of the church at large (i.e., not simply from the district in which the seminary resides). The faculty is drawn from the church at large as well. Furthermore, in the placement process, the church at large is also active. One district president does not do all the slottings, not even the chairman of the Council of Presidents, under the theory that he “represents the whole church.” No, the whole set of district presidents is involved in, and finally must approve of, all of the placements.

Still further, the colloquy process is not under the aegis of only one man. No district president does the colloquy interview by himself; indeed, neither does the First Vice-President of the Synod (though he is elected by the church at large). Instead, representatives from around the church take part.

Contrast this with the procedure for the LLDs. Here, everything is under the aegis of one man, who is elected by his district alone. The program is under his aegis, and the placement and tenure is under his aegis. This is something fundamentally other than what is done in all other pastoral training and placement contexts, and it raises fundamental questions about the transparochial nature of the ministry being conducted. Such questions should be eliminated.

Q2. Relatedly, the report refers to the “transparochial” recognition of calls, which is conveyed by ordination, when the whole church affirms the validity and legitimacy of a call, even though it is extended by a congregation. But lay deacons are already licensed by a district in a process the Synod approved in 1989. Isn’t that transparochial recognition?

A. Christ gives the Office of the Holy Ministry to the whole Church (John 20:19–23; Eph. 4:11–12). It provides transparochial *recognition* in specific ways. In the rite of ordination, the calling congregation is asked, “Will you, the faithful of _____ Lutheran Church, according to the Church’s public confession, and speaking for the whole Church, receive _____ as a servant of Christ and minister of Word and Sacrament? If so, answer, We will.” (Italics and underlining added.) Though the significance of ordination can be exaggerated and misunderstood, the congregation’s response to this question and the laying on of hands by fellow pastors testify to the fact that the Office of the Ministry does not simply belong to a given local congregation, or even to a particular district, as noted in the first question, since pastors from other districts and even other church bodies with whom we are in fellowship are invited to participate. Ordination, therefore, makes clear both to the man set apart for the pastoral office and to the congregation what he is to be and to do in their midst (by means of a serious vow). The rite *also* makes clear the recognition of the wider church that the man has legitimately been called and placed into the Office of the Holy Ministry (by means of Scripture, prayer, and the laying on of hands).

Such churchwide *recognition* does not exist for deacons. For this reason there are questions and confusion about the service of deacons. Because their work is not recognized *transparochially*—it is also not recognized as a valid exercise of the Holy Ministry by many. Such uncertainty—this lack of clarity about the work of deacons and its legitimacy—is tragic and unnecessary. It can be resolved if those who serve pastorally, preaching and administering the Sacraments, *are recognized* transparochially through the colloquy process proposed by the task force.

Q3. Does the report elevate tradition over theology in regard to ordination?

A. By “tradition over theology,” the questioner is apparently contrasting custom with a scripturally required practice. The task force does not believe that ordination with the laying on of hands is something our Lord Himself mandates in Scripture for He never commands ordination. The Lord has given the authority and responsibility for calling pastors to congregations, while He does not require a specific training process or training locale. The Lord also provides the requirements for pastoral characteristics and ability to teach in 1 Tim. 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9 and charges local congregations with holding pastors accountable to such, even how to properly consider accusations (1 Tim. 5:19). Ordination (the laying on of hands) is once again not required by the Lord but is how the whole church recognizes that the Lord has led the local congregations to call specific men as pastors and place them into the Lord’s service for the church. Since LLDs are currently not considered pastors, this does not properly occur.

C. F. W. Walther calls ordination “an apostolic, churchly order and only a solemn public confirmation of the call”

(*Church and Office*, or *Church and Ministry*). This does *not* mean, however, that ordination is incidental or unimportant to the Office of the Holy Ministry. The Apology notes: “If ordination is understood with reference to the ministry of the Word, we have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament” (XIII 11). Walther also vigorously objects to ordination’s omission because it has “the important purpose of publicly confirming that the call is recognized by the whole church as legitimate and divine” (*Pastorale*). This important, theological aspect of ordination is emphasized in the report, noting that ordination is the means by which the “transparochial” (beyond the local) aspect of the ministry is affirmed. The report’s recommendations, therefore, while certainly respectful of tradition, are based on theology, not mere custom.

Q4. Do the report and recommendations satisfy concerns that have been raised about practice that is consistent with Augsburg Confession (AC), Article XIV?

- A. Both seminary faculties and the CTCR have examined our report. In conversations as well as by resolution, all three entities expressed support of the theological framework put forward in the report and its particular discussion of AC XIV. Objections that have been raised elsewhere had to do only with the concern that the understanding of AC XIV in the report might lead to false conclusions about ordination, e.g., as that an emphasis on ordination is a disavowal of the truth that the Office of the Keys is given to the *whole* Church (see Walther, *Church and Office*, Thesis IV on the Church and Thesis VI on the Office). Such a misperception is contrary to the understanding of the task force and its report.

Q5. Why does the task force report ignore the biblical office of deacon since it is mentioned in 1 Tim. 3:8–13 (see also Phil. 1:1)?

- A. Rather than ignore what the Bible says about deacons, the task force gave full consideration to the matter, including the idea of a biblical office of deacon. But there is no clearly defined “office of deacon.” The *references to deacons in the New Testament simply do not provide any sort of specific definition or description of such an office*. The New Testament term *diakonos* means servant or minister—in a basic sense as a go-between—and is used both in ordinary contexts and church contexts (e.g., the “attendants” in Matt. 22:13 are deacons, as are the “servants” in John 2:2). In the words of John Collins, perhaps the foremost authority on deacon terminology, in both verb and noun forms “usage was fluid and applications were varied” (John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, p. 235).

As a consequence, in church history and in contemporary Christianity, the title “deacon” can be and has been applied to church offices with a wide variety of responsibilities, from pastors of lesser rank to assistants providing bodily aid and liturgical helpers. The task force, therefore, noted on page 6 (fn. 21):

It is certainly the case that the Bible refers to deacons; however, there is no indication within the texts regarding the service that deacons provide. They are associated with bishops (“overseers” or *ἐπίσκοποι*), respectable and reputable, and clear about the faith, but beyond that there is nothing about what the “office” implies or involves. For that reason it is not surprising that deacons are not a constant in church history and that their role varies dramatically in different times and places. John Collins

simply says “it is unlikely that this section of 1 Timothy can provide any more precise idea of the diaconate” (*Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1990], 238). None of this denies that the church is free to have or not have an office of deacon, but the definition of that office would be a matter of human authority, not divine authority, and it should not create confusion about the necessity of the one office of preaching.

Q6. Why not ordain deacons as a helping office to pastors rather than turn to specific ministry pastor (SMP) ordination?

- A. Establishing an ordained diaconate is a theoretical option that the LCMS could pursue, and the task force considered this. It would require, however, numerous theological clarifications. “Deacon” is not clearly defined biblically, confessionally, or historically, and in churches that have deacons, the office and its responsibilities have a variety of meanings. Questions about the status and meaning of the office would need to be determined by the Synod in a way that satisfied all concerns. How would it be distinguished from the pastoral office? Since the Synod currently has female deacons (that is, deaconesses), how would male and female deacons differ? After examining this idea, it was the judgment of the task force that ordaining deacons would entail further confusion and would not heal divisions.

Q7. Don’t we need a variety of church workers, just as there are a variety of medical professionals who have different duties?

- A. Yes, we do. We have a variety of auxiliary offices that are optional for congregational service, in addition to the one required Office of the Public Ministry. Some see an analogy between the relationship of doctors and physician assistants or nurse practitioners with that of pastors and deacons, since doctors delegate some of their work to such assistants whom they oversee and pastors delegate responsibilities to the deacons they oversee. For example, both doctors and physician assistants or nurse practitioners can prescribe medications. A better analogy might be that of a judge and other officers of the court. A judge is assisted by many other officials, but only he sits over courtroom proceedings, an authority that cannot be delegated. For the Office of Public Ministry, the defining responsibility is one of public preaching and the administration of the Sacraments for the church (see AC V). Based on this, the report’s first recommendation is to make this clear: when you preach and administer the Sacraments for a congregation, you are serving as a pastor. Note that, as with any analogy, correlations to another situation are limited. In each case, one must ask what responsibilities can rightly be delegated and what responsibilities are so central they cannot be delegated.

Q8. How do we uphold the Office of Public Ministry in a positive manner without it diminishing the priesthood of all believers? How do we uphold the priesthood of all believers without diminishing the office?

- A. Both the priesthood of believers and the office of preaching—the public ministry—are biblical teachings. They must be held in balance, without distortion by elevating one at the expense of the other. The report seeks to be very clear in this regard. Ecclesiastical authority, or “the Office of the Keys,” is given to the whole Church, but the whole Church confers the authority and duty to publicly preach and administer

the Sacraments to competent men on behalf of everyone. So men are prepared, called, and confirmed by the church as a whole as “called and ordained servants of the Word” who serve in the public ministry, even as every individual Christian also serves Christ in sharing the Christian faith with their family, friends, co-workers, and others. The priesthood of believers and public ministry complement each other; they do not compete.

Q9. *Do we need to give more emphasis to the roles of laywomen in the Lord’s mission?*

- A. The task force Recommendations 7 and 8 are designed to encourage the role of all laity in sharing the promises of the Gospel with the world. If adopted, encouragement of the work of outreach from within our various vocations—husband or wife, son or daughter, employer or employee, etc.—would certainly emphasize particular ways in which both lay women and lay men have opportunities to share the Gospel.

Q10. *What questions does our task force raise about mission and the role of evangelists?*

- A. A basic question about the Church’s mission is raised and answered: Is mission the work of ordained servants of the Word alone? The answer is that all of God’s baptized children have a role to fill in the Church’s mission, since every member of the universal priesthood can and should “proclaim the excellencies” of Him who called us “out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). By “evangelism” and “evangelist,” the report is talking about outreach or proclamation to unbelieving or unchurched individuals. Evangelism does have a more general meaning—proclaiming the Good News. The task force chose to emphasize evangelism as a “role” rather than an office, as a reminder that it is a responsibility for all believers. An “office of evangelist” could, and perhaps should, be established, especially as one considers the way in which it has been utilized in fast-growing Lutheran churches in the global South. But “the work of the evangelist” certainly has a place in every pastor’s ministry whether or not there is a particular office of evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5).

Q11. *Are we creating an office of evangelist and will this result in confusion about the use of evangelists just as we currently have with LLDs? What does the report mean by the “role” of evangelist?*

- A. The task force is not recommending the creation of an office of evangelist. As noted earlier, the task force chose to emphasize evangelism as a “role” rather than an office, as a reminder that it is a responsibility for all believers. It would be an entirely different question whether the Synod would wish to create an auxiliary “office of evangelist.” Such a question would deserve thorough study on its own, and one matter worthy of consideration would be potential areas of confusion through the creation of such an office.

Q12. *Does the report place restrictions on mission or open the path for more mission outreach?*

- A. The report strongly encourages the recognition that the “path” for mission—sharing Christ with the world—is open to every believer. It is legitimate to say that the Office of the Public Ministry is restricted since men, not women, are called to it, and so also adults, not boys, and those able to teach, not those without the ability to teach publicly. But the priesthood of the baptized (or priesthood of all believers) is the way in which the whole church exercises the office of the keys in daily life as ordinary Christians speak of Christ, pro-

claim His forgiveness, and guide their families, loved ones, co-workers, and others into the truth of Christ.

Q13. *Does the report hamstring the mission of the church through human structures?*

- A. The church on earth is a human structure. Structure prevents chaos. The task force report suggests some structural improvements that, we pray, will diminish discord and division in the Synod over how to address ministries challenged by financial need, geographical isolation, or a lack of pastors from certain ethnic or demographic groups. It seeks to do nothing that would hamstring mission or outreach to those who do not know Christ. Rather, its recommendations are intended to urge greater clarity about and encouragement of the work of outreach by every member of the church. In all discussions, it should also be remembered that there are offices with specific duties that are established by divine right. Thus, the pastoral office, as the office to which the public preaching and the administration of the Sacraments is given, exists by divine right. It is by divine right, not mere human arrangement, that a congregation is to call a pastor (see C. F. W. Walther, *The Form of Christian Congregation*, § 20).

Q14. *How can the emphasis on new mission and ministry become more of a focus for the report and proposed plan? Does the report take into consideration the needs of the changing post-church or post-Christian mission fields of the United States?*

- A. The report emphasizes the need for outreach and mission. The “post-church and post-Christian mission fields” of today are an environment that necessitates such an emphasis, since the number of professing Christians in North America is shrinking. Recommendations 7 and 8, in particular, encourage the ongoing use of various district programs that assist pastors and churches in training laity for service to Christ in their daily vocations and in the activities of their congregations. The role that the laity can and do play in Christian outreach is inestimable. The church grows when Christian men and women “are prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). The need is not for turning the laity into “little pastors”—as if one shares the Christian faith only on Sundays from the pulpit—but for every Christian to be a strong, vibrant witness in daily life. Walther is helpful:

Thus, my dear ones, you see: the office of Preacher or Caretaker of souls has not been instituted so that no one else is responsible for teaching or the care of souls. No, the whole congregation is to be a holy people, a royal priesthood. Each Christian should bear the needs of the soul of his neighbor in his heart and assist in the advance of the salvific Gospel (*in the lives*) of men so that the kingdom of Satan in the world is destroyed and the Kingdom of God expanded. Oh, how differently things would look; how much greater and more wonderful would be the blessing of the Word of God, if each Christian recognized his holy calling and administered his royal priesthood. With that in mind the Apostle cries to the Corinthians, ‘*Strive to love. Be zealous for the spiritual gifts, but primarily for the gift of prophesying Christ’s message of salvation.*’ (*The German imperative is plural, denoting all of the people*). (C. F. W. Walther, 1842 sermon, “Holy Desire and Duty of All Christians to Lead Souls to Christ”)

Q15. *The report speaks about lay people involved in evangelism and outreach, but isn't the work of evangelism the responsibility of the pastoral office?*

- A. Please note the answers to questions 9–12 above, which address this same concern. In addition, it may be helpful to read what Michael Green has stated in his book *Evangelism in the Early Church* (quoted also in the report):

One of the most striking features in evangelism in the early days was the people who engaged in it. Communicating the faith was not regarded as the preserve of the very zealous or of the officially designated evangelist. Evangelism was the prerogative and the duty of every church member. We have seen apostles and wandering prophets, nobles and paupers, intellectuals and fishermen all taking part enthusiastically in this the primary task committed by Christ to His holy Christian Church. The ordinary people of the Church saw it as their job: Christianity was supremely a lay movement, spread by informal missionaries. The clergy of the Church saw it as their responsibility, too: bishops and presbyters, together with doctors of the Church like Origen and Clement, and philosophers like Justin and Tatian, saw the propagation of the gospel as their prime concern.

Q16. *Is the use of technology, as suggested in Recommendation 5, in keeping with good theology and practice?*

- A. People will have varying perspectives on this matter. Certainly no one wants to encourage “virtual church” in place of a congregation gathered to hear Christ preached by its pastor and receiving the Sacraments from him. At the same time, some districts that have chosen not to utilize lay deacons have opted instead to have a pastor who serves two far-distant congregations, present in each on alternating weeks and uploading his sermon to the congregation where he is unable to be present.

Q17. *Do the report and recommendations discourage men from residential seminary training in the name of mission?*

- A. The task force does not want any of its recommendations to be misunderstood as discouragement of our residential programs. We need more men, not fewer, to enroll in the highest level of theological and personal formation, such as we have on our two seminary campuses. There they engage in study on the highest academic levels but also have the opportunity for daily life together with fellow seminarians and professors in which casual conversations, chapel services, and special campus events enrich their preparations on many levels, as well as their participation in the ministries of local congregations and specialized ministries. Residential theological education allows men to work in, and to become familiar with, a variety of contexts for public ministry. Nevertheless, as much as residential pastoral preparation may be regarded by many as the preferred option or “gold standard,” it seems evident to the task force that our Synod must also continue to utilize other approaches for preparing pastors. In Acts 16:1–5, we read of the Christians at Lystra and Iconium speaking well of Timothy, and Paul then taking Timothy to be trained. The Synod’s SMP program, Center for Hispanic Studies, and Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology provide strong non-residential training that prepares men for pastoral service in a specific mission and ministry context. These non-residential programs begin with a call from a congregation that is followed by seminary-level training in a localized

context with attentive mentoring and supervision, examination, and the whole church custom of ordination.

Practical Questions

Q18. *What does the change from LLDs to SMPs give to the Lord's mission, congregations, LLDs, districts, and what does it take away?*

- A. A deacon who is colloquized and then ordained as a specific ministry pastor loses nothing other than some time and effort necessary for the colloquy process. This will include a week of preparation through instruction by two seminary professors, provided at no cost in a retreat setting in the region of the country where he serves. This will be followed by an interview with a colloquy committee that includes his district president and pastors from his region as well as regular colloquy committee representatives. The ordination as a specific ministry pastor will give a synodwide endorsement to his ministry, rather than the district-only endorsement of the LLD programs—thereby ending questions about the legitimacy of his service to the church.

Q19. *What are the options for congregations who are served by LLDs when the LCMS calls upon the LLDs to become SMPs? Do we need to delineate these options?*

- A. When the regular preaching and administration of the Sacraments are currently conducted by a licensed deacon (that is, he is fulfilling the primarily pastoral work in a congregation), the task force recommendations provide three options for the deacon:

1. Apply to one of our seminaries for an alternate route or master of divinity.
2. Apply to one of the seminaries for the regular SMP program.
3. Apply to the Colloquy Committee for admission to the SMP roster by colloquy.

It is assumed that most of the men licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry and functioning as *de facto* pastors would take this third option of a special colloquy process to the SMP roster. If a man so licensed does not take one of these three options, his license to preach and administer the Sacraments will lapse as of July 1, 2018.

Q20. *How are congregations and LLDs to be prepared for such a transition?*

- A. Any convention resolutions to adopt task force recommendations will need to specify the process to be followed. The task force report timeline suggests the period of a year and a half to allow for communicating with districts, congregations, and LLDs; assisting and guiding them through the transition; and implementing an SMP colloquy process.

Q21. *Are we asking the people who are least able to change because a few believe a change must occur? What do we tell the people who must make a change? How will this change benefit them?*

- A. These are important questions because included in the purposes of the Synod are promoting “the unity of the true faith,” strengthening one another for bold witness and mission, and preparing church workers (LCMS Constitution Art. II). The task force plan recognizes the challenges faced by congregations that are small, isolated, financially challenged, and unable either to find or to support a pastor. Wherever deacons are serving such churches as, in effect, their pastor—preaching regularly and administering the

Sacraments—very little change and virtually no expense will be required to change from a deacon to a specific ministry pastor. Wherever financial need is an obstacle to the transition, support will be available through the Synod's Office of Pastoral Ministry. Such deacons will be eligible for a streamlined, regional colloquy process that will result in their ministry being recognized as fully legitimate and answer the objections of those who have been troubled by practices that are inconsistent with our biblical theology of the pastoral ministry and the call, as exhibited in the Augsburg Confession (Art. XIV). The change will conclude the controversy and an ongoing criticism of the work of such deacons as they transition from being licensed deacons to ordained pastors. Current limitations on their ministries, such as their inability to pronounce the absolution, will no longer exist.

Q22. Does the task force report press all deacons into tracks to ordination?

- A. No, it certainly does not. No one is to be coerced into the Holy Ministry. When a deacon is fulfilling the responsibilities and functions of the Holy Ministry—that is, when he is the chief servant of the Word, preaching and teaching for a congregation, and administers Christ's Sacraments on their behalf, then he is *already* engaged in the Holy Ministry. The first concern of the task force report is that whenever that is the case, this man's ministry should be recognized and validated by the whole church through the colloquy process (Recommendation 1). If other individuals, deacons or otherwise, wish to serve as preachers and in the administration of the Sacraments, then for the sake of good order, they, too, ought prayerfully to consider the ministry. Many other deacons who wish only to assist in other ways, from teaching to evangelism to visitation, should feel no compulsion to enter a track toward ordination.

Q23. The current need for ordained pastors to serve challenging ministries may be met in part through the colloquy of the deacons serving them (Recommendation 1). But what about the future, when these men retire or can no longer serve? How do we, in an ongoing way, provide men to serve the congregations and ministries with minimal resources in isolated areas or those made up of new immigrants or other minorities?

- A. This important question is addressed, in part, by the report's second recommendation that not only endorses greater use of SMPs to provide pastors for congregations facing challenges such as minimal financial resources or geographic isolation but also includes this: "Synod must ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any eligible candidate from participating in the SMP program." The task force included this final sentence only after receiving firm assurances from the Office of National Mission that financial resources are available and would be provided to aid eligible SMP candidates with demonstrated need. The very same financial commitment is part of Recommendation 3 that affirms and encourages participation in training programs that have been created as vehicles for the theological education of individuals from ethnic and linguistic minority groups. SMP and the cross-cultural programs mentioned in Recommendation 3 are structured along the lines of "on the job training" or, we might also say, extended vicarages, so that individuals can be trained for the Office of the Holy Ministry while remaining in their current location and serving existing congregations and ministries. Currently, no financial aid

is available for such men. The recommendations change that, enhancing these programs' feasibility and appeal.

Q24. Does the task force recommend that there be no new trained ecclesiastically supervised lay deacons licensed after January 2018?

- A. The answer depends on what aspect of the present practice of licensing lay deacons is referenced. Yes, if the task force recommendations are adopted, by January 2018 there will no longer be licensed lay deacons serving as *de facto* pastors of congregations, that is, regularly preaching and administering the Sacraments, because these men will have become ordained pastors recognized by the entire Synod.

But does that mean the end of our practice of training lay people for service in the church? No. Those individuals who have completed diaconal training and serve in ways other than preaching and the administration of the Sacraments—over one-third of all deacons—will continue to do so. The task force Recommendations 7 and 8 commend district-level programs with the desire for them to continue to prepare lay men and lay women for service in the church to assist pastors and congregations in a variety of ways. We need more, not fewer, lay people trained as leaders, especially in the role of evangelism. Of course, should a man trained locally desire to serve as a pastor, he may apply to one of our residential seminaries, or he may apply to one of our SMP programs for pastoral training in place. In other words, we need more lay leadership training, but if we ask a man to do pastoral work, we need to train him and clearly recognize him as a pastor.

Q25. I am a deacon trained in my district and licensed to help my pastor mostly with visitation. He might ask me to preach once or twice a year, but I never preside for the Lord's Supper. I visit sick and shut-ins, and I help with the distribution of Holy Communion. Do the recommendations of the report apply to me? Will I need to colloquize if I want to continue doing what I'm doing in my congregation?

- A. The simple answer is no. Recommendation 1 of the 4-06A Task Force applies specifically to those licensed lay deacons who are functioning as *de facto* pastors of a congregation. That's not what you are doing. Indeed, there are many trained deacons across the Synod for whom the task force's first recommendation does not apply. However, the task force is also recommending that district programs for training lay leaders to assist pastors, particularly in evangelism, are to be encouraged and strengthened (Recommendations 7 and 8).

Q26. I am president of a district that has many trained and licensed deacons. The majority of them serve within their congregation under the direct supervision of their pastor to assist the pastor in visitation and teaching Bible study. They rarely preach and never preside for the Supper. We have a few men who do regularly preach and teach and administer the Sacraments under some light supervision from a pastor in the area. How will the recommendations of the task force, if adopted, affect us?

- A. The task force's first recommendation will not affect the majority of deacons who are not doing regular Word and Sacrament ministry and are not serving as pastors of congregations. However, the men in your district who are functioning as pastors will be required, if the task force recommendations are adopted, to do one of the following (by July 1, 2018): apply to one of our seminaries for an alter-

nate route or master of divinity; apply to one of the seminaries for the regular SMP program; or apply to the Colloquy Committee for admission to the SMP roster by colloquy in the manner described in the report. It is assumed that most of the men licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry and functioning as *de facto* pastors would take this third option of a special colloquy process to the SMP roster. If a man so licensed does not take one of these options, his license will lapse as of July 1, 2018. It will be the responsibility of the district president to see to it that the requirements adopted by the Synod are carried out.

Q27. Can the task force provide specific definitions of emergency and exceptional circumstance?

- A. We must be careful here. Emergencies are exceptional circumstances, by definition. But not all exceptional circumstances are emergencies. (To have a dozen retired pastors in one's congregation is an exceptional circumstance, but it is hardly an emergency.) A true emergency is an exceptional circumstance that has dire consequences attached to it. Focusing on emergencies, then, the task force quotes Luther's dictum, "Emergency knows no rule." One cannot get too specific about what is or is not an "emergency" because the word implies unexpected and dire circumstances demanding immediate action. The task force decided that to try to define terms such as emergency (or even exceptional circumstance) would encourage endless debates that would quickly devolve into trivialities. Few would disagree that when a pastor is stricken by an illness Sunday morning, it is necessary for a layman to step in to lead the congregation in his absence. It is both an exceptional circumstance and an emergency. But when the practice of a layman preaching and administering Sacraments has become the rule, it is no longer an "exceptional circumstance" and certainly not an emergency.

VIII. Report of Res. 5-01A Task Force

The 5-01A Task Force was successful in carrying out its charge “to study and report on the issues of confessional Lutheran identity in all Concordia University System (CUS) institutions.” The fruit of this study was that the CUS presidents and their boards of regents embraced “The Lutheran Identity Standards for CUS Institutions,” along with ten protocols that specify the ways in which confessional Lutheran identity will be incorporated into all aspects of institutional and campus life. These “Lutheran Identity Standards” begin with a brief doctrinal prologue that indicates solidarity with the doctrinal and theological confession of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This is noteworthy, as such a clear and thorough identification with a church’s confession and practice is extraordinary in the culture of higher education.

A drafting committee of the 5-01A Task Force met and began work on potential Bylaw changes that would enhance and support best practices in governance. The committee’s working drafts and suggestions will be shared with the floor committee for their consideration as possible material for its convention resolutions on higher education.

Lutheran Identity Standards for CUS 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 its 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 art and science.¹

Accordingly, the colleges and universities of the CUS affirm and promise to uphold these identity standards:

1. Identity Statements

The institution’s mission statement (and/or vision statement) clearly identifies it as a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) institution, as do the institution’s primary print and electronic publications.

2. Governing Board

All of the institution’s regents are active members in good standing of an LCMS congregation (Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [5]).²

3. Senior Leadership

The president and the senior leaders over academics, student life, admissions, and athletics are active members in good standing of LCMS congregations, and all faithfully participate in worship and religious activities on campus and in their local congregations.

4. Faculty

Each tenure track or continuing-level faculty search is given optimal exposure among members of congregations of the LCMS to identify faculty who are qualified in their respective academic disciplines 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 (cf. Bylaw 3.10.5.6.2).

The majority of the full-time faculty are members of LCMS congregations. In cases where this standard is not met, the institution will develop a plan to reach this minimum standard and submit it to the CUS.

The institution has an ongoing faculty and staff development program required of all faculty, senior administrators, and senior staff members that clearly explains the tenets of LCMS higher education and what it means to be a faculty, administrative, or staff member at a CUS institution. Adjunct or part-time faculty members engage in a similar faculty development program that likewise explains the fundamental tenets of LCMS higher education and what it means to be a part-time faculty member at an LCMS institution.

5. Theology Faculty

All theology faculty (full-time and part-time) are active members in good standing of LCMS congregations and fully affirm the theological confession of the LCMS. As the LCMS Bylaws indicate, all full-time theology faculty receive prior approval from the CUS board of directors before being appointed or called (Bylaw 3.6.6.1).

6. Academic Freedom and Responsibility

All full-time faculty acknowledge their acceptance of the CUS statement of Academic Freedom and Responsibilities. All faculty, both full- and part-time, pledge to perform their duties in harmony with Scripture, the Confessions, and the Synod’s doctrinal statements (Bylaw 3.10.5.6.2).

7. Faith and Learning

In accordance with the doctrine of the two kingdoms, all faculty strive to faithfully bring Lutheran theology into interaction with their various academic disciplines while respecting the integrity of those disciplines. Likewise, in other campus arenas, faculty, staff and administrators will seek to apply Lutheran theology within their campus vocations.

8. Required Theology Courses

The institution requires two to three theology courses for an undergraduate degree, typically in Old Testament, New Testament, and Christian doctrine. Because these courses are directly related to the theological identity of CUS institutions and to the identity formation of graduates, these theology courses will normally be taken at a CUS institution. Exceptions to this will be approved by the institution’s called theological faculty.

9. Preparation of Church Workers

The institution provides resources to recruit, form, nurture and place students preparing for professional church work in the LCMS (e.g., pre-seminary, (pre-)deaconess, deaconess, Lutheran teachers, DCEs, DCOs, DPMs, etc.). Specific programs vary by campus.

10. Campus Ministry

The institution offers regular opportunities for worship that reflect the confession of the church.

Faculty, staff, and students are strongly encouraged to participate in these services. The institution calls a campus pastor or chaplain, who is a minister of religion—ordained of the LCMS, who oversees the worship life of the community, organizes opportunities for Christian service and witness, and provides pastoral care for students.

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 ten Lutheran Identity Standards. The report will be endorsed by each respective board of regents and will be shared with the campus community.

October 18, 2014

Lutheran Identity Standards for CUS Institutions**Explanations, Applications, Best Practices, and Items for Further Discussion****1. Identity Statements****2. Board Members**

Explanation: On this and following points, we simplified the wording of membership. Called ministers are, indeed, direct members of the Synod, but they are also affiliated with local congregations. Thus stating congregational membership is sufficient for this point. (It also closes an alleged loophole based on misunderstanding. A person cannot be a member of the Synod without being affiliated with a particular LCMS congregation.)

Discussion item: (Best Practice) Board members will have been active communicant members of LCMS congregations for at least 2 years before their appointment. (Obviously we cannot see the heart; this is looking for outward signs of synodical fellowship.)

3. Senior Leadership

Explanation: We added oversight of athletic leadership to this list in recognition of the fact that students in athletics often have more contact with these staff members than any other person on campus. Many athletic programs include faith components, so the need for theological and ecclesiastical alignment is significant.

Explanation: The spirit of this is that the *principal leaders* of the university and its individual units are fully aligned with our mission. To make this a reality, the leaders must have genuine visibility to the day-to-day functions of each unit.

Discussion item: We might fruitfully discuss whether this needs more specificity or if best practices might be more expansive. For example, should school deans be required to be members of the LCMS? They make hiring recommendations (perhaps just shy of the actual decision—but they certainly have a role in filtering candidates). If not all deans, what about the dean overseeing theology or church work programs?

4. Faculty

re Optimal exposure of open positions

Discussion item: Do we need standards (or best practices) for “optimal exposure” of open positions, such as publication in *Reporter* or *The Lutheran Witness* before the beginning of interviews with ample time for applicants to respond and be vetted for interviews? (Do we want to propose a length of time for response?) There needs to be a good faith effort on this point. We might discuss how this works in cases of expediency (which can reflect real challenges, but can also mask agendas to deliberately bring in non-LCMS faculty). (Perhaps refer this to the CUS Provosts/CAOs for discussion?)

Discussion item: Further work is needed to help our system schools in this area. The CUS board of directors is charged with serving “as a resource for the development of lists of potential teaching and administrative personnel” (Bylaw 3.6.6.5 [h]). What can we do to identify and nurture LCMS faculty prospects? For example, could we propose some endowed (or funded) professorships or postdoctoral fellowships to train the up and coming? a scholarship program for graduate school that is linked to required teaching?

Discussion item: How can we encourage all of our campuses to raise up the best of our LCMS students for future professorships and share them with one another (avoiding challenges of academic inbreeding)?

Discussion item: Further/ongoing work is needed on a candidate database. This may require the development of standards for who gets in. Interest alone is not sufficient; a minimum educational level may be required (MA or equivalent; probably not just MDiv in the case of theology). Clearly stated expectations (e.g., academic freedom, teaching load, need to have or complete terminal degree, etc.) would help in this regard.

re Faculty and Staff Development

Explanation: Senior administrators and staff are included in this as their important influence also needs to be normed by our LCMS identity.

Explanation: The faculty development program includes all faculty members, LCMS and non-LCMS alike. All will benefit from reflecting on how our theological identity applies to higher education and what it means to be affiliated with the LCMS. In addition, this will helpfully put Lutherans in relationship with non-Lutherans.

Discussion item: We need to provide some help here. How can we develop and/or improve this? Should we create a more centralized program? (That has pros and cons.) Should portions be available online with campus-specific additions? Could we bring some of the leaders of our programs together for collaboration (e.g., Moulds at CUNE, Dawn at CUI, etc.). Might the task force provide some guidance for what this might look like?

Discussion item: An adjunct faculty development program may be an area where a unified program from the CUS, perhaps with some local campus customization, could be particularly helpful.

Note: CUENet may be a helpful partner in these development programs.

An additional item:

Discussion item: (Best practice) We recommend that a best practice in this area is that LCMS faculty members will pursue colloquy as ministers of the Gospel and that their university will support them in this endeavor.

5. Theology Faculty

Explanation: We recognize the value of ordained theological faculty to both the university and the church. At the same time, there are times when highly qualified commissioned ministers or laity may be beneficial to university and church. One would not want to write our principles so rigidly as to exclude a Philip Melancthon or Martin Franzmann.

Discussion item: (Best Practice) If a layperson is selected, the terms of their position will include successful completion of colloquy.

Explanation: As the bylaws indicate (Bylaw 3.6.6.1), all full-time theological faculty, regardless of roster status, will first receive prior approval.

Explanation: Part-time theological faculty will meet the same standard of theological integrity as full-time.

6. Academic Freedom

See appendix to this report for full CUS policy.

7. Faith and Learning**8. Required Theology Courses**

Explanation: In addition to theological identity, it is important to recognize that the quality and content of religion and theology classes varies tremendously at non-CUS universities. This is why these courses are normally taken at a CUS school. The called theology faculty are best equipped to review exceptions to this ordinary practice.

Explanation: (Best Practice) In referring to theology courses, this statement means courses in Lutheran Christian theology. While there is tremendous value in other religious studies topics (e.g., World Religions) and these likely are taught at CUS schools, these are in addition to the minimum standard of courses addressed above.

Explanation: It is assumed that these courses are 3 semester units each, or that an equivalent number of credits (minimum of 6) is required.

Discussion Item: Should graduate programs have a similar requirement? At least one class—perhaps in vocation and ethics—that applies

Lutheran theological principles to their specific discipline could be very helpful.

9. Preparation of Church Workers

10. Campus Pastor

Explanation: (Best Practice) The campus pastor will strive to work together with other LCMS clergy on and off campus for the spiritual well-being of the campus community.

Explanation: (Best Practice) Other campus ministers may be called to assist the pastor in this work. These may include commissioned ministers (e.g., deaconesses) and other staff as needed.

Assessment of Institutional Commitment to Lutheran Identity

Explanation: Reports should candidly note both areas of success and areas that need improvement. They should include practical, specific plans to move towards fulfillment of these standards.

Discussion item: This process should be managed by the executive director of the CUS. It would be helpful if the CUS would provide a template for these reports.

Discussion item: These reports could form the basis for the periodic CUS visits to each of the campuses.

Task Force Recommendations

The 2013 Res. 5-01A Task Force was charged with

1. studying and reporting on the issues of confessional Lutheran identity in all CUS institutions;
2. strengthening all CUS institutions' connection to the synod;
3. reviewing the composition, size, and selection of boards of regents;
4. review of Bylaw 3.6.6.5 (k) regarding the consolidation, relocation, separation, or divesting of CUS institutions; and
5. review of governance structures.

All of these issues are addressed below. While there are many topics related to the CUS and the colleges and universities of the Synod, the task force focused on its charge. After much study and discussion with the task force, university presidents, board members, and other stakeholders, we have addressed these topics in the following ways.

1. Studying and reporting on the issues of confessional Lutheran identity in all CUS institutions

- The task force adopted a set of identity standards for all CUS schools.
- These standards have been adopted by the CUS institution presidents.
- Each campus is being asked to communicate these standards to their faculty and staff by January 31, 2016.
- Each board of regents is being asked to formally adopt them no later than May 31, 2016, and to report this to their campus community and to the CUS.
- Identity standards approved by presidents
- Will be formally adopted by regents and shared
- Each campus will prepare its first annual report on the standards and will share them with their campus community and report them to the CUS no later than May 31, 2016.
- Thus we will have concrete evidence and further affirmation of these identity statements before the Synodical Convention.
- We recommend that the Synod in convention affirm and celebrate the universities' affirmation of the identity standards. We further recommend that the Synod pledges to stand with the CUS institutions in these times of social change and political pressures and that members and congregations are urged to support and pray for the colleges and universities of our Synod.

2. Strengthening all CUS institutions' connection to the Synod

The entire work of the Res. 5-01A Task Force has involved strengthening the connections of the colleges and universities in

the Synod. This report evidences this. Following are some specific highlights:

- The adoption of uniform Lutheran identity standards and a mechanism for ongoing reporting and review of key markers of identity
- A new process for vetting regents which will facilitate the election of effective board members who are faithful to our church-related mission
- Two additional regents who are directly appointed by the Synod President, whose concurrence is required for nominees under consideration for presidential succession before submission to the Synod's prior-approval process
- An ecclesiastical subcommittee of the boards of regents with particular responsibilities related to identity issues. This will be added to the CUS policy manual. The ecclesiastical subcommittee
 - assists the president, board, and campus with theological and ecclesiastical issues;
 - interfaces with campus ministry personnel, theology and ministry faculty, and called workers;
 - is directly involved with interviews of full-time faculty members with an eye toward mission and identity; and
 - is responsible for receiving and evaluating Lutheran identity reports and facilitates their proper distribution and communication.

3. Reviewing the composition, size, and selection of boards of regents

See recommended Bylaw changes below.

4. Review of Bylaw 3.6.6.5 (k) regarding the consolidation, relocation, separation, or divesting of CUS institutions

See recommended Bylaw changes below.

5. Review of governance structures

See recommended Bylaw changes below.

For further discussion and action (by others)

While we have addressed the themes of 2013 Res. 5-01A, we recognize that there are other topics that should be considered in the future. These include

- a comprehensive consideration of the purpose, function, and efficiency of the Concordia University System and the Council of Members;
- discussion of shared governance issues, including faculty governance and communication;
- further discussion of which college/university positions should be filled by LCMS faculty (e.g., should provosts be required to be LCMS members? school deans? heads of certain departments?);
- development of deeper pools of qualified LCMS faculty prospects;
- enhancement of faculty development programs, including research on whether these are done individually or with system-wide resources; and
- encouraging LCMS faculty to pursue colloquy and supporting them in this endeavor.

Recommended Bylaw changes

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Concordia University System

3.6.6.3 The Board of Directors of Concordia University System shall be composed of nine voting members and four nonvoting members (no more than ~~one member~~ two members elected by the Synod shall be from the same district, and no executive, faculty member, or staff member from a Lutheran institution of higher education may serve on the Board of Directors of Concordia University System as a voting member): [*Rationale: brings in alignment with other boards; better able to select the best board members*]

Voting Members:

The Synod's Board of Directors shall serve as the nominating committee for the Concordia University System Board of Directors and is responsible for verifying their qualifications. Voting mem-

bers include: [NB: this will require modifications to other bylaws including 3.12.3, Nominations]

1. Two ministers of religion—ordained elected by the Synod
2. One minister of religion—commissioned elected by the Synod
3. Two laypersons elected by the Synod
4. Three laypersons appointed by the delegates of the members of Concordia University System. Candidates are to be approved by the Synod's Board of Directors prior to election.
5. The President of the Synod or his representative

Bylaws continue as written until last paragraph, which concludes

...management, or fund development. ~~The Chief Administrative Officer of the Synod (or a designee) and the Secretary of the Synod (or a designee) shall review and verify that nominees are qualified to serve as stated above. [NB more extensive replacement process described below.]~~

- 3.6.6.4 ~~The presidents and interim presidents of the Synod's educational institutions shall comprise an advisory council which shall meet at the call of the Board of Directors of Concordia University System and report the results of its studies to the board for consideration in making its decisions. [Rationale: don't need a bylaw to have advisors]~~

- 3.6.6.5 In keeping with the objectives and the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod, the Board of Directors of Concordia University system shall

- (a) ~~develop detailed adopt~~ coordinating policies and procedures for cooperative roles and responsibilities of the colleges and universities after consulting with or receiving recommendations from the colleges or universities of the Synod;
- (b) ~~together with boards of regents and the Board of Directors of the Synod, coordinate institutional planning and approve capital projects in relation to campus property management agreements and institutional approve capital projects and changes to institutional master plans of the colleges and universities, upon recommendation of the boards of regents; [Rationale: clarification and simplification]~~
- (c) ~~review and approve new programs and manage peer review of in the interest of the institution(s) and the Synod. [Rationale: peer review not relevant here]~~
- (d) ~~establish policy guidelines involving distribution of grants from the Synod (restricted and unrestricted) and efforts for securing additional financial support from other sources;~~
- (e) ~~obtain data on liberal arts education and current trends and government regulations in higher education that impact upon collaborative efforts and relationships within the Concordia University System;~~
- (f) ~~together with the Board of Directors of the Synod, establish and monitor adopt criteria and standards for determining institutional viability, fiscal and otherwise of the colleges and universities, subject to approval by the Board of Directors of the Synod, and monitor compliance with these standards and criteria;~~
- (g) ~~together with districts, congregations, local boards of regents, and national efforts, assist congregations and districts in student recruitment for both professional church work and lay higher education;~~
- (h) ~~serve as a resource for the development of lists of potential teaching and administrative personnel;~~
- (i) ~~upon request of assist~~ the President of the Synod; assist in monitoring and promoting the on-going faithfulness of all the Concordia University System institutions and all colleges and universities to the Synod's doctrine and practice Article II of the Constitution of the Synod;
- (j) ~~together with schools, districts, congregations, and national efforts, foster continuing education for ministers of religion—commissioned;~~

- (k) have authority, after receiving the consent of the Board of Directors of the Synod by its two-thirds vote and also the consent of either the Council of Presidents by its two-thirds vote or the appropriate board of regents by its two-thirds vote, to consolidate, relocate, separate, or divest a college or university: a college or university of the Synod may be consolidated with another college or university of the Synod, relocated, sold, dissolved, or separated from the Synod only after a two-thirds vote of the Board of Directors of the Synod and either a two-thirds vote of the board of regents of the college or university or a two-thirds vote of the Concordia University System Board of Directors.

- 3.6.6.6 The Board of Directors of Concordia University System shall receive evidence on a regular basis from boards of regents and campus administrators that they are, after consulting with the colleges and universities of the Synod, adopt policies to assist and ensure that the boards of regents and campus administrators are

- (a) actively working ...
- (f) maintaining accountability of its institutions to the system-wide board, ~~while expecting stronger governance of the institutions by their boards of regents;~~

E. Concordia University System Boards of Regents

- 3.10.5 Each college and university of the Synod, with its president and faculty, shall be governed by a board of regents, subject to general policies set by the Synod

- 3.10.5.1 ~~In exercising its relationship to the Synod and to the Concordia University System as set forth elsewhere under Bylaw 3.6.6ff., 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. [Rationale: content is addressed in other bylaws]~~

- 3.10.5.2 The board of regents of each college and university shall consist of no more than ~~17~~ 25 voting members.

1. One ordained minister, one commissioned minister, and two laypersons shall be elected, as described below, by the conventions of the Synod.
2. One ordained minister, one commissioned minister, and two laypersons shall be elected, as described below, by the geographical district in which the institution is located,
3. No less than four and no more than ~~eight~~ fourteen laypersons regents shall be appointed as voting members by the board of regents, following approval as described below.
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. The President of the Synod, in consultation with the institution's president and board of regents chair, appoints two voting members.
56. 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 be active members of a member congregation of the Synod.
67. Not more than two of the elected members shall be members of the same congregation.
78. Persons elected or appointed to a board of regents should be knowledgeable regarding the region in which the institution is located. ~~They and~~ shall demonstrate familiarity and support for the doctrinal position of the Synod as set forth in Article II of its Constitution and as outlined in Bylaw section 1.6. In addition, they should and possess two or more of the following qualifications: theological acumen, an advanced academic degree, experience in higher education administration, administration of complex organizations, finance, law, investments, technology, human resources, facilities management, or fund development. Demonstrated familiarity and support of the institution is a desired quality in the candidate. ~~When regents are elected at the national conven-~~

tion of the Synod, qualifications shall be reviewed and verified as outlined in Bylaw 3.12.3.7. When regents are elected at district conventions or appointed by the board of regents, 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) When regents are elected at national or district conventions, the Concordia University System Board of Directors serves as the nominating committee. In addition to normal nominating bodies, the local board of regents may also nominate candidates. The Concordia University System Board of Directors reviews and verifies the nominees' qualifications in consultation with local boards of regents. The resulting slate of candidates is given to district and synodical conventions for election. Floor nominations may be made from the pool of nominees previously vetted for positions in boards of regents in the prior three years. [NB: this will require modifications to other Bylaws including 3.12.3, Nominations]

(b) When regents are elected by the local board of regents, the local board serves as the nominating committee, verifying qualifications in conversation with campus stakeholders. Their approved candidates are given to the Concordia University System Board of Directors for approval. Candidates approved by the Concordia University System Board of Directors are eligible for election by the local board of regents. [NB: this will require modifications to other bylaws including 3.12.3, Nominations]

Concordia University System Presidents

Replace all of 3.10.5.5 as follows.

3.10.5.5 The president of the institution shall be the executive officer of the board of regents. He shall serve as the spiritual, academic, and administrative head of the institution.

(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 the policies of the board of regents.

Dean O. Wenthe, *Chairman*

Notes

1. C. F. W. Walther, "Foreword to the 1875 Volume: Are We Guilty of Despising Scholarship," in *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Editorials from "Lehre und Wehre,"* trans. August R. Suelflow (St. Louis: Concordia, 1981), 124–25.

2. For purposes of clarity, this document is using *member* inclusively to include both laypersons whose membership is in a local congregation and called ministers of the Gospel who are themselves members of the Synod.

Appendix

CUS Academic Freedom Policy

1. Higher Education Mission Statement

"The colleges, universities, and seminaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod exist to supply the higher education services needed to accomplish the mission of the church.

"Strongly committed to the Lutheran concept of vocation, synodical colleges and universities are liberal arts institutions which provide a Christ-centered spiritual and value-oriented environment for men and women who will be Christians in the church and in secular occupations.

"The objectives of the Synod include the recruitment and education of professional church workers. Therefore, central to the system of synodical higher education is the preparation of those who are called to serve through preaching, teaching and related vocations.

Professional preparation for the pastoral ministry is the special assignment of the Synod's seminaries."

"Statement of Mission and Purpose"
as adopted by the 1986 LCMS Convention

2. Freedoms and Opportunities

1. Much of value can be learned from the concepts of academic freedom that are commonly found in American culture. However, academic freedom and its related responsibilities as recognized and practiced in the Concordias have their fundamental basis in the Christian identity of our institutions of higher education.
2. A Concordia campus views academic freedom and responsibility as an expression of the reality of the scriptural Lutheran faith. As agencies of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Concordias express the confessional significance of believing in Christ and his Scriptures, teaching the scriptural Lutheran faith, and confessing the Gospel to the world.
3. A Concordia campus is a Christian community, characterized by a high awareness of the reality and importance of collegial relationships and commitments.
4. A Concordia campus values the centrality of a Lutheran understanding of Law, Gospel, and the forgiveness of Christ for all. This reality permeates classrooms, administrative work, and human relations among all campus constituencies.
5. A Concordia campus provides opportunities for faculty to integrate faith, life, and learning. This includes opportunities to address issues in our contemporary environment from the standpoint of informed Lutheran scholarship.
6. A Concordia campus values the individuality of each faculty member and respects the right of faculty to hold diverse opinions. The right of persons to retain the convictions of their faith and conscience is respected, but the institution has specific expectations regarding the presentation of doctrinal teachings.
7. A Concordia campus expects its faculty to exhibit a strong commitment to scholarship and the professional expectations of the various academic disciplines. The pursuit of knowledge through intellectual inquiry and research is highly valued as a mark of institutional excellence.
8. A Concordia campus respects the right and responsibility of faculty members to present the empirical and historical subject matter involved in their scholarly disciplines. Scholarly information related to the subject matter may be presented, provided the manner of presentation is within the parameters of the responsibilities and limitations listed below.

3. Responsibilities and Limitations

1. A Concordia faculty member may present and discuss concepts that conflict with synodical teachings, including historical information and the results of research in a faculty member's discipline. The corresponding responsibilities are that the faculty member presents the material in a manner that encourages constructive insights and enhanced understanding of the issues, that he/she presents a fair and accurate description of the synodical position, and that he/she does not advocate a position contrary to that of the Synod.
2. A Concordia faculty member acknowledges that he/she functions within a community that has multiple dimensions (e.g., campus, congregations, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the church-at-large, society). As a responsible colleague, the faculty member has a clear awareness of the position of respect and responsibility that those communities confer upon faculty members.
3. A Concordia faculty member acknowledges that in certain situations he/she will voluntarily limit his/her expression of opinions and convictions. Such limitations involve a professional and personal judgment regarding the appropriateness of the message to the audience, so that the mission of the institution and of the church is supported rather than hindered.

4. A Concordia faculty member affirms that expressions of academic freedom are primarily a matter of individual and professional responsibility.
5. A Concordia faculty member will ordinarily confine his/her teaching and counseling of the institution's students to his/her areas of professional expertise.
6. A Concordia faculty member, when engaged in publication and public presentation, will do so with the awareness that there is always a tacit association of the professor with the institution.
7. A Concordia faculty member acknowledges that he/she is serving an institution that is an entity owned and operated by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and that the Synod expects its mission, values, and teachings to be clearly taught and reflected in its institutions.
8. A Concordia faculty member will work peacefully under the Constitution, Bylaws, and policies of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, its Board for University Education or Board for Pastoral Education, and the institution.
9. A Concordia faculty member will not actively promote a doctrinal position that is in opposition to the doctrinal position of the LCMS. A Concordia faculty member accepts responsibility for becoming knowledgeable regarding the teachings of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on the theological topics and issues related to his/her academic responsibilities.

4. Due Process

1. The fundamental purpose of due process regarding academic freedom responsibilities is to protect the academic freedom of the faculty member and to uphold the policies and positions of the institution. The attitude of all involved should be inclined to humility and forgiveness.
2. Each institution is responsible for maintaining clearly stated procedures for due process that include the process described in the 2010 LCMS Handbook, section 3.10.5.6.9.

5. Implementation

Written acceptance of the preceding “Responsibilities and Limitations” is required for all faculty. This applies to new and renewal contracts as well as offers of regular appointment. Faculty with tenure or open-ended contracts shall sign the above “Responsibilities and Limitations” one time.

Concordia University System
adopted January 2002
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R64

IX. Report of the Res. 5-14A Task Force

Introduction

The 2013 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod adopted Res. 5-14A, which reads, simply:

Whereas, The SMP Task Force Report notes that there are eight routes to ordained ministry; and

Whereas, The SMP Task Force Report recommends for the sake of clarity and simplicity that a study of the non-Master of Divinity routes to the Pastoral Office take place; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod President appoint a task force (chaired by the Executive Director for Pastoral Education) to conduct a study of the non-Master of Divinity routes to the Pastoral Office, and that it report its findings and 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.

The present task force members were appointed by President Matthew Harrison in response to this resolution. We herewith submit this report, divided into the following parts:

1. **The Lord through His Church Places a Man into the Pastoral Office**
2. **The Several Means by Which Men Are Prepared for the Pastoral Office**
3. **Evaluations and Recommendations**
4. **Necessary Bylaw Changes**
5. **A “Growth Path” Approach to Continuing Pastoral Formation**

Members of the Task Force:

Res. 5-14A did not define the composition of the task force. The President of the Synod appointed the following task force members:

Executive Director of Pastoral Education—presently vacant (at the time of the initial appointment, Dr. Glenn Thomas was serving in this position and served as the first chairman of the task force).

Synod Chief Mission Officer—Rev. Kevin Robson (Rev. Greg Williamson was CMO at the time of the initial appointment; Rev. Bart Day served for a time as interim CMO and was for that time a member of the task force).

Rev. Dr. Carl Fickenschier, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

Rev. Donald Fondow, President, Minnesota North District.

Rev. Wayne Knolhoff, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Rev. Dr. Herbert Mueller, First Vice-President, Task Force Chairman (when Dr. Glenn Thomas accepted a call to the parish, the task force elected Dr. Mueller as chairman).

Rev. Dr. Richard Nuffer, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

Rev. Dr. Leopoldo Sanchez, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Section One—The Lord through His Church Places a Man into the Pastoral Office

Jesus’ disciples learned that His kingdom is more of an activity than a place. The “reign of God” to save us is found wherever God is present through His Word. The Kingdom certainly was here on this earth when Jesus began His ministry and preached God’s Word to the Jewish people. And what greater display of saving activity could there be than the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus? But that Kingdom activity would not end with Jesus’ ascension. The disciples would continue the ministry of proclaiming the Gospel that Jesus

had begun, and when they did, the kingdom of God would continue to come near to sinners. What Jesus had told His disciples behind locked doors on Easter evening must have been a message He hammered home to them during these 40 days: “*The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.*” “*I am sending you*” (Luke 24:46–48; John 20:21). After 40 days of intense teaching about the kingdom of God, the disciples were ready. Jesus sent them, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the Good News and announce the saving reign of God in His death and resurrection. God reigns through His Word that does what it says: “your sins are forgiven you!”

The New Testament passages listing qualifications for the pastoral office focus mainly on the character of the man proposed for the office (“above reproach, husband of one wife, sober minded, self-controlled, respectable,” etc. [1 Timothy 3:2ff]). The one theological requirement in that section is that the man be “able to teach.” He must “keep a close watch on himself and on the teaching” (1 Timothy 4:16). He must be “able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9). Character and the ability to teach and to hand the doctrine on to others are the qualifications Scripture looks for. These high standards apply to each of the various means by which the church recruits and trains pastors from her midst.

Here is scriptural rationale supporting the work of our seminaries to train future pastors, as well as the careful work of our Colloquy Committee. We want men who love Jesus, whose hearts have been transformed by the Holy Spirit so that they also love people. We want men who are fiercely loyal to their Savior and to His Body, the Church. But we want these men to be thoroughly trained in biblical truth as well as other necessary disciplines for the task.

The Church as the Bride of Christ then assures itself that men are properly prepared by examining their doctrine and life, certifying them, calling them, and placing them into office. Ordination is the rite by which the Church takes the men so examined and called, places them into office, and consecrates them, by the Word of God and prayer, for the pastoral ministry. Though all this is done by the Church, we believe the Lord Himself, who works through means, is at work through His Church.

Even as we discuss the various “non-Master of Divinity routes to the Pastoral Office” referenced in 2013 Res. 5-14A, the question may be raised by some: Why do we insist that pastors be called and ordained in the first place? Why might it be out of order for the church to tell a layman to go and do pastoral work without having received and accepted a call, and without the recognition of the wider church by means of ordination? The task force appointed to respond to 2013 Res. 4-06A on licensed lay deacons has included in its report an explanation of Augsburg Confession Art. XIV that provides the rationale for call and ordination.¹ The present task force, responding to 2013 Res. 5-14A on alternate routes to the pastoral office, agrees with the approach of the 4-06A Task Force and reproduces here the thoughts of that task force on the subject:

How Is “Rite Vocatus” to Be Understood? (AC XIV)

Central to the theological debate regarding L[icensed] L[ay] D[eacon] practices is the understanding of AC XIV, referred to above. Since the Augsburg Confession was written in both German and Latin, both languages are translated in recent scholarly editions of the Book of Concord. A comparison of translations from German and English shows there is no difference in substance. The translation from German in the Kolb-Wengert edition reads: “Concerning church government it

is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call.” The translation from the Latin is: “Concerning church order they teach that no one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly called.” The restriction within this article is the relevant point: “without a proper [public] call” is based on the German *ohn[e] ordentlich Beruf* and “unless properly called” is based on the Latin phrase *nisi rite vocatus*.² Public ministry—preaching, teaching, and sacramental administration in and on behalf of the church—is restricted only to those with a proper call, or, in other words, to those properly called. So what does that phrase “*rite vocatus*” mean? What is a proper call?

While the question about the proper understanding of the phrase *rite vocatus* is, in large measure, a topic we must consider from within the realm of our *confessional* commitments, we should not ignore the *biblical* texts underpinning Art. XIV. As confessional Lutherans, we subscribe to the Confessions *because* they rightly express *Scripture’s* teaching. Thus, C. F. W. Walther properly grounded the Office of the Ministry not in custom or good order (as much as they may play a role), but in the Word of God. It is the Word which restricts those who should preach, even though the Word also affirms that every Christian is a priest (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10), that all Christians are “taught by God” (John 5:45), and that, as Luther explained, when any Christian is with those who do not know Christ “it is his duty to preach and to teach the gospel.” “In such a case a Christian looks with brotherly love at the need of the poor and perishing souls and does not wait until he is given a command or letter from a prince or bishop. For need breaks all laws and has none.”³ There is no biblical restriction on sharing the faith in one’s daily vocation in the world.

In the church, however, things are different. Walther says that “there is an office to teach, feed, and rule, which Christians by virtue of their general Christian calling do not possess.”⁴ The texts are clear: Paul asks rhetorically whether all are apostles, prophets, or teachers in 1 Corinthians 12:29, knowing that the answer is no, for God Himself appoints (sets in place) different people in different offices for the well-being of the whole church (1 Cor. 12:28).⁵ Paul himself declared that he was “appointed” to his office as preacher, apostle, and teacher (1 Tim. 2:7; 1 Tim. 1:12).

This truth pervades the whole of Scripture. God, not man, calls each of us to proclaim the message of His redeeming love in Christ Jesus, yet He also establishes this particular “office.” He called prophets in the Old Testament and then promised through them that He would give shepherds (pastors) also in his new covenant to “feed” His people “with knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3:15). The Lord Jesus Himself saw to the fulfillment of this promise when He called His apostles and commanded them to feed His sheep (John 21:15–17; cf. also Matt. 10; 28:18–20; Lk. 9:1–10; Mark 16:15; John 20:21–23). The apostles were unique as eyewitnesses, but not as appointed preachers—for the office of public preaching and teaching and sacramental administration would not end with them. Rather, they assured the growing church that their pastors/elders/bishops (the name of the office varied) had been placed in their office by the Holy Spirit, not human decision, in order that God’s Church would be nurtured (Acts 20:28; cf. Eph. 4:11). Moreover, the apostles, who had been called directly (immediately called) by Christ Himself did not exalt themselves over those whom God later called and appointed through the church (indirectly or mediately). Rather, Peter exhorts elders “as a fellow elder” (1 Pet. 5:1).⁶

It should be clear, then, that this responsibility—the Office of the Public Ministry, as we are accustomed to refer to it in the LCMS—is not optional, but commanded. Walther emphasizes that in his Thesis III on the Ministry/Office, yet he immediately also reminds us that this vital office is not in opposition to the priesthood of believers or a sign of superior holiness, but one of service (Thesis IV). Art. XIV stands on firm scriptural ground as it restricts the public preaching and teaching of the Gospel and its sacramental administration to those who have been appointed to such duties.

How does that appointment—that right and proper public calling—take place? In a variety of ways. No one particular method of providing the Office of the Ministry has been followed either through the tradition of the Church catholic or in Lutheran tradition. What is vital is that the public ministry be filled in a way that is in keeping with the requirements of Scripture and the Confessions. The proper calling—*rite vocatus*—involves several aspects. The task force commends to the Synod the understanding of this phrase that was emphasized in the CTCR’s 2003 report *Theology and Practice of “the Divine Call.”*⁷ The report’s focus is “placement into the Office of the Public Ministry”—that is, the “divine call” or “call and ordination.”⁸ The report speaks of “the divinely established office referred to in Scripture as ‘shepherd,’ ‘elder,’ or ‘overseer,’” or, as “the office of the public ministry.”

After examining the scriptural evidence for the call into ministry, the report summarizes by noting that placement into the office of Word and Sacrament occurs in several different ways and that the texts which describe these methods provide guidance only inferentially. It also notes that the New Testament is less concerned with procedure than with the qualifications of ministers and the importance “for the church to know that the man who occupies the pastoral office has been placed there by God.”⁹ Prefatory to its examination of the Confessions, *Divine Call* notes: “In general, the Confessions stress two points: pastors are not self-appointed; and, bishops are not the exclusive ones who may ordain.”¹⁰ The latter point is especially emphasized in the Treatise: “Philip Melancthon’s treatise is a theological rationale for Lutherans to undertake the ordaining of their own pastors.”¹¹ Melancthon also obliquely addresses the development of the diaconate as a step toward the Roman view of a necessary hierarchy in ministry. The report affirms Melancthon’s view that, “Regardless of their title (pastor, elder, teacher [doctor], preacher, minister, and occasionally bishop, though almost never priest), all ordained clergymen have the same basic authority to discharge the duties of their office (AC XXVIII, 8, 21; Tr 60–61, 74).”¹² Noting Melancthon’s references to the rights of calling, choosing (or electing), and ordaining, *Divine Call* argues that, “Taken together, the terms used by the Treatise constitute and explain the ‘rightly called’ (*rite vocatus*) of AC XIV.”¹³ Further, *Divine Call* suggests how the three aspects of “rightly called” may be distinguished:

The “right of choosing” (*jus eligendi*) refers to the nomination and selection of an individual. The “right of calling” (*jus vocandi*) designates the actual request or call of the individual to serve. The “right of ordaining” (*jus ordinandi*) refers to the act by which one is placed into the public office of ministry.¹⁴

Therefore, the confessional understanding of *rite vocatus* involves three elements: examination (or certification), call, and ordination. The examination identifies an individual who has been properly prepared in terms of doctrine and whose life will be in keeping with the office he is to hold. The call is the congregation’s affirmation that God has called this individual to serve them as their pastor. The ordination provides the means by which the wider church—the Synod in our case—recognizes the examination and call of the individual and places him into the ministry of the church. Thus, the congregation’s call is the local affirmation of an individual’s ministry, and ordination is the transparochial affirmation of the same. So the CTCR said in 1981:

We stress the fact that ordination is the declaration of the whole confessional fellowship. In the end, a single congregation or an agency representing larger segments of the church does issue the call. Nevertheless, in a synod of congregations bound by a common confession and loyalty, good order demands that admission into the pastoral of office or into its closely allied auxiliary offices is not the act of a single congregation or agency. Various ways can be found to establish this approval of the whole church. Presently the certification of suitability for the ministry by the faculty members who have taught the candidates and the assigning of first calls by the Council of Presidents is workable and does express the transparochial nature of the ministry.¹⁵

Please note, how a church examines, calls, and ordains has been done in various ways through the ages. Our church has made determinations for how best to do these different things for the sake of good order. Examination takes place via seminary faculties or colloquy process. Calls are issued, in most cases, by action of the congregation alone, acting to fill its pastoral vacancy. Ordination is conducted on behalf of the whole church by the district president or his representative after due examination and call. During the ordination, the calling congregation speaks on behalf of the whole church to receive the candidate as a duly called and ordained pastor.¹⁶ *Rite vocatus* includes this whole process. None of these three aspects is negotiable or unnecessary, even though they do not occur simultaneously and they may be implemented in various ways.¹⁷ Moreover, these three aspects are not wooden nor are they understood legalistically. For example, as candidates for the ministry are being prepared (in the examination process) for call and ordination, they are required, as vicars (or “interns”), to preach, albeit under the supervision and authority of their supervising pastor.

Specifically, Why Ordination?

We have noted earlier Walther’s emphasis that the Office of the Ministry is not a position of superiority. It is not to be exalted over the office every Christian holds by virtue of Baptism. Luther was just as emphatic. Referring to the public ministry by the term “priest” as was still current at his time, Luther writes: “Whoever does not preach the Word, though he was called by the church to do this very thing, is no priest at all, and that the sacrament of ordination can be nothing else than a certain rite by which the church chooses its preachers.”¹⁸ Walther is therefore following this practical understanding of ordination when he says of ordination: “The ordination of those who are called with the laying on of hands is not a divine institution but an apostolic, churchly order and only a solemn public confirmation of the call.”¹⁹

Because of such statements in our tradition, some have questioned the importance of ordination. The practice of unordained men preaching and teaching publicly is often connected with this perspective and such quotes from Luther and Walther are sometimes used to promote the service of lay preaching and sacramental administration. Why is ordination important, even if it not a mandate from our Lord, but “an apostolic, churchly order and only a solemn public confirmation of the call”?

To answer this question, we need to look at the qualifications for pastors. The Pastoral Epistles summarize the qualities the church must look for in her pastoral servants.²⁰ Above all, they must be “above reproach” so as not to put obstacles in the way of the Gospel and must be “able to teach” so that they proclaim Law and Gospel clearly. Self-chosen good works quickly become idolatry.²¹ Therefore, no one is able to certify himself or declare himself qualified for ministry, but the Church as the Bride of Christ is to put in place the structures necessary to assure herself that her ministers are qualified. No one should set himself up as pastor, so the church develops procedures by which pastors are called. We believe God calls, but through the congregation(s). And because our congregations are members of a confessional fellowship, we seek to recognize in a public way through the participation of the wider church that a pastor is properly called.²²

Ordination is the public rite of the Church, living in Christ, that proclaims openly all these elements.²³ Candidates for ordination must be examined or certified by the church (in our Synod, by one of the seminary faculties or by the Colloquy Committee) as “able to teach” and fit for pastoral ministry according 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9. Candidates for ordination must also be properly called—no one is ordained without a valid call. So our district presidents may ordain (or authorize the ordination of) only such men as have been properly certified (or examined) and rightly called.

The Rite of Ordination does not confer a special character or power on the person. It is also, as Walther emphasized, an apostolic custom and not a divine mandate. But such important qualifications of the practice should not lead us to assume it is unimportant or a mere formality. The confessors never dispute the practice of ordination to the Holy Ministry,

even while insisting that they have adopted a different manner of ordination because of the unwillingness of Roman bishops to ordain pastors for their churches (SC III 10 [K-W 323–324]; see also Ap XIV 1–3). In the Augsburg Confession, ordination is public recognition of the call by the wider Church (beyond the individual congregation) testifying that the man is qualified and has been properly called to be a pastor. It is the call, we believe, that makes a man a pastor of a particular congregation. Ordination, as a rite, is not mandated by the Lord. However, the Church *is* mandated to put a man “under orders” to Jesus in the Office of the Holy Ministry through the church’s right calling. Our Lord Jesus thereby puts a man into the Office for His use. Therefore, because our congregations are part of a wider fellowship, we call only such men as are properly certified, and we seek the recognition of the wider church by ordaining (and publicly installing) them to office. We believe omitting any of these elements would be schismatic and contrary to the “catholicity”²⁴ of the Church and the unity of our Synod’s fellowship. Why?

1. The Rite of Ordination publicly witnesses that a man is found by the church to be “able to teach” and fit for ministry and has been properly called to the office.
2. The Rite of Ordination extracts from the candidate for ordination a very serious vow, making clear for the man and to the congregation what the Lord through His church is charging him to be and to do. He is not to lord it over the flock, but to serve. He is not to make up his own message, but is to proclaim what he has been given, according to Scripture and the Confessions.
3. In the Rite of Ordination, the church, by the Word of God and prayer, puts the man in office and makes clear that he is to be pastor, and that his task is the public (on behalf of all) administration of the Word and Sacraments.²⁵
4. In the Rite of Ordination, the congregation, on behalf of the whole church, receives the man as a minister of Word and Sacrament, and also, on behalf of the church, pledges itself to support the pastoral office with love, honor, and obedience in the Lord (when the pastor brings God’s Word), as well as with gifts and fervent prayers.

The purpose of ordination is to **make clear** to the people in both the congregation and the wider church that a man is set apart to be pastor, as well as to **make clear** to both the man and the people what he is to be and to do in their midst.²⁶

Resulting Considerations for the 5-14A Task Force

These realities regarding call and ordination are reflected in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod. First, one of the objectives of the Synod is to “recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers” (Constitution, Art. III 3). A condition of membership in the Synod for congregations is that they call and are served by pastors on the roster of ministers of religion—ordained of the Synod (Constitution, Art. VI 3). Despite the various routes by which men are prepared for the pastoral office, the only groups authorized to examine and certify candidates for initial placement in the office are the two seminary faculties and the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry (Bylaws 2.7.1; 3.10.2; 3.10.4.7.10). Congregations call pastors, and the Council of Presidents, acting as the Board of Assignments, places them in their first call (Bylaw 3.10.1.3). These Bylaw requirements²⁷ apply to all whom the Church raises up, recruits, and prepares for the pastoral office.

Section Two—The Several Means by Which Men Are Prepared for the Pastoral Office

Though 2013 Res. 5-14A speaks of “routes to the pastoral office,” as though men take the pastoral office upon themselves, the task force believes it more appropriate biblically to speak of means by which the Church raises up (i.e., recruits, examines, trains) men who are then prepared for the pastoral office. No one may take up the office

of his own volition. He must be called by Christ through the Church. This is foundational to the understanding of everything that follows.

As will become clear, the most complete means of preparing a man for the general responsibilities of the pastoral office and a lifetime of service is the master of divinity route at our two seminaries. This full residential experience has always been our “gold standard” for pastoral formation. That said, from the beginning, our Synod has developed a variety of means by which pastors are recruited and trained for the Church, then called, set apart, and placed in office (i.e., ordained). Both of our seminaries actually predate the Synod. From their inception, each of the two seminaries had complementary but different emphases. St. Louis was called the “theoretical seminary” and Fort Wayne/Springfield the “practical seminary.”²⁸ Colloquy has also served the Synod well, from the beginning of our fellowship. Both seminary and colloquy involve training, examination, and certification by a competent authority before one is called and ordained. Every pastor called, placed, and ordained in our Synod will have been certified for call and placement—either by the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry or one of our two seminary faculties—through one of the following “routes to the pastoral office”:

- **Certification by the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry** (Bylaw 3.10.2)
- **Certification by Faculty, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis** (Bylaw 3.10.4.7.10)
 - Master of Divinity (three years residential, plus a vicarage)
 - Alternate Route (certificate, generally two years residential, plus a vicarage)
 - Center for Hispanic Studies (certificate via distance learning and residential intensives)
 - Cross-Cultural Ministry Center (a certificate program at Concordia University, Irvine, under the aegis of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis)
 - Deaf Institute of Theology (certificate via distance learning and residential intensives)
 - Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (certificate via distance learning and residential intensives)
 - Specific Ministry Pastor Program (SMP—certificate via distance learning and residential intensives)
- **Certification by Faculty, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne** (Bylaw 3.10.4.7.10)
 - Master of Divinity (three years residential, plus a vicarage)
 - Alternate Route (certificate, generally two years residential, plus a vicarage)
 - Specific Ministry Pastor Program (SMP—certificate via distance learning and residential intensives). Concordia Theological Seminary, as a distinct track within its SMP program, also offers “Bilingual Pastoral Formation for Latinos” (an SMP track via distance learning and residential intensives in cooperation with Concordia College—New York).

Each one of these initiatives prepares a man to be a general pastor except for the SMP programs at both seminaries. General pastors may receive a call to any ministry in the Synod for which they are qualified. They are also eligible for election to synodical office. Specific ministry pastors are fully ordained pastors, but they are limited in their service to specific contexts and always serve under the supervision of a general pastor (see Bylaw 2.13.1). They are ineligible for election to synodical office.

Regardless of their resulting roster status as general pastor or specific ministry pastor, the men involved in each of these aforementioned “routes” are always certified for call and placement by either (1) the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry or (2)

one of the two seminary faculties.

The task force received extensive documentation from “subject-matter experts”—district presidents and program directors of the various routes to the pastoral office—as well as from several participants. Each of these routes has a number of people from our Synod fully invested in that particular route. Each one serves an important constituency and has valid reasons for existence. The various routes are summarized below. For greater ease in comparing them, see also the charts in Appendix B.

Colloquy

[From the Policy Manual for the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry:]

General Requirements

Applicants for colloquy must be male, men of good moral character who have been prepared for the pastoral ministry in some manner **apart from** the various routes leading to ordination existing within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. An applicant must “*be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil*” (1 Timothy 3:2–7; see also 4:1–16; 2 Timothy 4:1–5; Titus 1:5–9, etc.). The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry will, as it considers each applicant, be the final authority for determining eligibility according to these biblical requirements.

Specific Requirements for Eligibility for Colloquy

To be eligible to apply for colloquy, applicants must fit into one of the three 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, and 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 “nondenominational” or “independent”) also may apply, but must supply suitable references and documentation of their authorization to perform pastoral ministry. In all cases, the academic requirements will apply.
2. **Men from Other Christian Church Bodies 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. This category does NOT apply for LCMS members who while members of LCMS

congregations have obtained Master of Divinity degrees outside the LCMS (see below).

3. **Licensed Deacons of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:** Men who have been licensed by the president of a district of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to carry out, as a licensed deacon, the full responsibilities of the pastoral ministry in (a) congregation(s) of the Synod, and who have carried out these responsibilities *for at least ten years,** may apply for admission to the pastoral ministry by colloquy. In all cases, such applications also must be accompanied by the recommendation of a congregation that holds membership in the Synod, on the basis of that congregation's observation of and experience with the applicant. The application must also include written documentation from the congregation and the district president that the applicant actually has been responsible for carrying out the full responsibilities of the pastoral ministry for at least ten years. Finally, to be considered by the committee, the application must be accompanied by the congregation's written commitment to extend a divine call for the applicant to become its pastor once the colloquy process has been completed.

* **Note:** Should the sponsoring district president be convinced that the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry ought to consider, on the basis of an applicant's special circumstances, an exception to one of these specific eligibility requirements (asterisked above), the sponsoring district president must furnish with the application a written recommendation detailing the special circumstances and the rationale for the recommended exception. The Colloquy Committee, however, retains the responsibility and authority for deciding to grant or to decline the exception. The decision of the Colloquy Committee shall be regarded as final by all parties to the colloquy application.

Others

Other applicants for the ordained ministry, such as commissioned ministers of religion, laymen of a special ethnic or linguistic group, and laymen who have fulfilled at least 10 years of significant service in a congregation, will participate in special theological education ("alternate routes") under the direction of the seminaries. LCMS laymen and commissioned ministers who receive a Master of Divinity from a non-LCMS seminary will also participate in an "alternate route" at one of our LCMS seminaries. All individuals who do not fit the three specific categories open for colloquy are to be directed to one of the seminaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.²⁹

"Alternate Routes" (both seminaries)

Before 1995, male ministers of religion—commissioned of the Synod who wished to become pastors and men with significant service in the church could apply for colloquy. The normal program outlined for such colloquy applicants involved approximately two years of seminary instruction, plus a vicarage. After the 1995 Synod convention, these men were no longer directed to the Colloquy Committee, but rather to the seminaries for an alternate route. Under this approach, the academic and admissions officers of the seminary review the academic transcripts and the life and character of the applicant and then design a program of study for him, including a vicarage/internship. Those completing such a program do not receive an academic degree but a theological diploma certifying that they are eligible to be called, placed, and ordained to the pastoral office. Some alternate route students also obtain a Master of Arts in religion, but that is optional. Here are the particulars:

Program Goal—forming general pastors

Year Program Began—1996. Previously, this route was under the auspices of the Colloquy Committee.³⁰

Special Church Needs That Prompted the Program—Residential alternate route is the certificate program more closely parallel to the

MDiv, for men 35 years of age and older, commissioned ministers, or men with significant parish experience.

Specific Needs Not Addressed through Other Programs—Residential alternate route provides a comprehensive theological education with extensive grounding in both theology and practice, exegetical skills based on Greek language, and ministerial formation leading to certification as a general pastor for those with significant prior church experience.

Total Number of Pastors Produced—Since 1996, Concordia, Fort Wayne, 127; Concordia, St. Louis, 85

Program Completion Rates—not available

Financial Assistance—provided at the same rates as master of divinity students

Placement—at completion of program

Call and Ordination—at completion of program

Ministry Context—general pastor, upon final placement

Educational Prerequisite—ability to work at a master's-degree level, two years college minimum; ordinarily will possess bachelor's degree, though some do not

Age—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 graduates of a synodical college/university or on the synodical roster of commissioned ministers with at least eight years experience as commissioned ministers of the LCMS.

Unique Admission Requirements—see above

Language and Level—English

Region—nationwide

Location of Instruction—residential at seminary

Supervising Pastor Required—only during vicarage

Vicarage/Internship—one year, generally after completion of course work

Degree or Certificate—certificate, though some also obtain a Master of Arts in religion

"Growth Path"—may pursue an MA or master of divinity degree

Biblical Languages Required—Greek

Curriculum Length—90 quarter hours, plus 12 hours Greek, plus vicarage

Program Length—generally three years

Roster Status—general pastor

Other—No supervising pastor required during course work, but faculty advisors assigned. There is a field education pastor supervising assigned field work in a parish.

Center for Hispanic Studies (St. Louis)

The Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) was established in 1987 by the LCMS and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia University Chicago to provide a linguistically and culturally contextual route to certification for ordination of qualified men in Hispanic contexts.³¹ In July 2006, the program was moved from Chicago to the seminary campus in St. Louis. The CHS is a certificate program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, which offers pastoral formation through a four-year, 18-course, nonresidential program with a concurrent two-year vicarage. The main language of instruction is Spanish, but bilingual activities are encouraged. The delivery method of instruction is a hybrid of online and short-term residential learning experiences. Graduates of this program do not earn an academic degree, but receive a theological diploma. However, once ordained,

they are general pastors in the Synod, serving mostly in Spanish-speaking congregations. CHS certificate students with a bachelor's degree or equivalent degree are encouraged to complete an MA, which is offered in the Spanish language. As of the fall of 2015, there are 11 enrolled in this program. Throughout its history, a total of 74 pastors have graduated from this program, plus 18 deaconesses.³²

Program Goal—preparing general Hispanic pastors, for mission and ministry where Spanish language predominates

Year Program Began—It began in 1987 as the Hispanic Institute of Theology under the auspices of CSL on Concordia Chicago's campus. In 2006, the 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. Its mandate is to form Hispanic pastors and deaconesses for the LCMS.

Specific Needs Not Addressed through Other Programs—pastoral and deaconess formation for US Hispanics (primarily immigrants) whose first or primary language is Spanish and are serving in US Hispanic missions where Spanish is a major component of these missions

Total Number of Pastors Produced—74 since the mid-1990s. Since 2006, the average number of pastoral graduates is seven to eight per year. Eighteen deaconesses have finished their program.

Program Completion Rates—72 percent of pastoral students admitted in the past 10 years have completed the program.

Financial Assistance—CSL's academic catalog states that "published tuition for CHS students will not generally be discounted." It also states that "merit scholarships may be available, but are not guaranteed."

Placement—initial

Call and Ordination—at conclusion

Ministry Context—Spanish language; Hispanic mission and ministry in the US

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—Ordinarily not less than 30 years of age. Pastoral students serving in a Spanish language mission and ministry, and where his presence and ministry are expected during and after the completion of the program.

Experiential Prerequisite—Language and cultural fit. 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 mission and ministry; (2) more appropriate than residential program due to language or educational background and socioeconomic realities

Language and Level—Spanish, but bilingualism is encouraged in the classroom and optional for some class assignments.

Region—nationwide

Location of Instruction—distance education with on-campus residential intensives and extension centers

Supervising Pastor Required—Supervising pastor is selected in consultation with the district president according to established seminary criteria for supervising pastors.

Vicarage/Internship—Concurrent vicarage begins second year of studies and ends before the fourth year of studies is completed.

Degree or Certificate—certificate

"Growth Path"—none specific; may pursue an MA

Biblical Languages Required—none

Curriculum Length—18 courses, 54 quarter hours, concurrent vicarage

Program Length—four years

Roster Status—general pastor

Attrition Rates—not known

Other—One third of course work is completed face-to-face through short-term on-campus intensives. Remainder of course work is completed through online technology.

Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (St. Louis)

The Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) is also a certificate program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, that has been in existence since 2003. The medium of instruction is English, though for nearly all of the students English is a second or third language. For men raised up in immigrant congregations (e.g., Ethiopian, Sudanese, other tribal cultures), course work is a combination of distance learning and on-campus intensives. Graduates of this program do not earn an academic degree but receive a theological diploma. However, once ordained, they are general pastors in the Synod. Presently (Jan. 1, 2016), there are 32 enrolled in this program. In the history of the program, approximately 70 have completed the program and have become pastors in the Synod.

Program Goal—first-generation ethnic pastor for ethnic ministry (service where traditional graduates are unable or unlikely to function)

Year Program Began—2003–04 academic year

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. DIT does the same for deaf communities and cultures. Both offer a program for women in mission and ministry contexts, which leads to commissioning as an LCMS deaconess.

Specific Needs Not Addressed through Other Programs—EIIT and DIT provide a basic understanding of Lutheran theology and practice within the context of the deaf community or the context of first-generation non-Anglo cultures, leading to certification as a rostered pastor or deaconess of the LCMS.

Total Number of Pastors Produced—approximately 70

Program Completion Rates—not provided

Financial Assistance—CSL's academic catalog states that "published tuition for EIIT/DIT students will not generally be discounted." It also states that "merit scholarships may be available, but are not guaranteed."

Placement—initial

Call and Ordination—at conclusion

Ministry Context—first-generation immigrant ministry

Educational Prerequisite—ability to work at a college level

Age—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 his 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 and/or educational background

Language and Level—English as a foreign language

Region—nationwide

Location of Instruction—distance education

Supervising Pastor Required—Applicants must be paired with an ordained pastor of the LCMS who will serve as their mentor/vicarage supervisor throughout the course of study.

Vicarage/Internship—concurrent vicarage

Degree or Certificate—certificate

“Growth Path”—none, but may pursue an MA in religion

Biblical Languages Required—none

Curriculum Length—16 courses, 48 quarter hours, concurrent vicarage

Program Length—four years

Roster Status—general pastor

Attrition Rates—not known

Deaf Institute of Theology (St. Louis)

The Deaf Institute of Theology is a program serving deaf congregations that operates in a fashion very similar to the EIIT program. Graduates of this program do not earn an academic degree, but receive a theological diploma. However, once ordained, they are general pastors in the Synod.

Program Goal, etc.—See above for EIIT program.

Cross-Cultural Ministry Center (St. Louis at Concordia, Irvine)

The Cross-Cultural Ministry Center, specializing in training pastors and church leaders for urban, multicultural ministry is a partnership of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia University, Irvine. The four-year curriculum includes a master's degree in theology and culture (31 credits), seminary certification courses (45 credits), and a four-year multicultural, church-planting vicarage experience (24 credits) leading to certification and ordination in the LCMS. Graduates will be trained especially to serve ethnic-specific or ethnically diverse congregations in the US. Classes are “delivered” on the campus of Concordia University, Irvine. The center seeks to accommodate the nontraditional student. Classes are held in the evenings and are also delivered via electronic means so that students living outside of southern California are able to complete their training without moving away from the church and community where they work. Graduates of this program do not earn a master of divinity degree but receive a theological diploma from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and a master's degree in theology and culture from Concordia University, Irvine. However, once ordained, they are general pastors in the Synod. Currently, approximately 20 men are enrolled.

Program Goal—new, sustainable, urban, cross-cultural church planter following a plan and plant developed within program

Year Program Began—1995

Special Church Needs That Prompted the Program—the need for a master's-degree-level missionary pastoral formation program for those embedded in their ministerial/cultural context (who otherwise could not come to seminary) who start new ministries in non-Anglo or multiethnic contexts

Specific Needs Not Addressed through Other Programs—The center provides a comprehensive theological education leading to general pastoral certification with an emphasis on cross-cultural mission-planting, with the goal of a new, sustainable, urban, cross-cultural

plant and new mission start developed within the program.

Total Number of Pastors Produced—50

Program Completion Rates—approximately 95 percent

Financial Assistance—No scholarships from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, but Concordia University, Irvine, may provide a 33 percent scholarship.

Placement—initial (concurrent vicarage)

Call and Ordination—at conclusion

Ministry Context—new ministries in non-Anglo context (bilingual as needed), within Southwestern region of the US

Educational Prerequisite—bachelor's degree with liberal arts criteria; must simultaneously enter Irvine's MA in theology and culture degree

Age—no requirement

Experiential Prerequisite—language, cultural fit, must be LCMS member two years

Unique Admission Requirements—Presence necessary to support ongoing ministry. Bilingual competence is also necessary for admission.

Language and Level—English. Need competence to work at a master's level in theology. All nonnative English speakers are assessed and take English prerequisite classes if needed.

Region—West Southwest Region

Location of Instruction—hybrid; minimum eight courses face-to-face; remaining through synchronous video conference

Supervising Pastor Required—Supervising pastor is chosen in collaboration with the district, interviewed by the director of CMC, and approved by Concordia, St. Louis.

Vicarage/Internship—four years of vicarage concurrent with instruction during which time the vicar starts a new ministry under the supervision of an ordained pastor

Degree or Certificate—Concordia University, Irvine's MA in theology and culture

“Growth Path”—none

Biblical Languages Required—Greek

Curriculum Length—27 courses, 73 semester hours, plus six Greek hours and vicarage

Program Length—four years

Roster Status—general pastor

Attrition Rates—not known

Other—For those near Irvine, 100 percent residential. For others, three weeks, minimum two courses, residential; remaining courses taught by synchronous live-feed video conference

Specific Ministry Pastor Program (both seminaries)

The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program was established by the Synod in 2007 to help congregations unable to afford a full-time pastor or congregations seeking help with a specific ministry. Specific ministry pastors are ordained but always serve under the supervision of a general pastor. Both of our seminaries operate SMP programs.

The SMP courses are contextual in that the men receive their academic training in the setting where they will continue to serve following ordination. They work with local pastor-mentors who support and guide them in the program and who provide day-to-day guidance, encouragement, and prayer. The courses of the SMP program are supported by state-of-the-art technology which engages the students with their instructors and with fellow students while building an interactive learning community. Each course includes a blend of Internet-based instruction, mentor interaction, practical ministry application, interaction with fellow students, and other requirements.

The SMP program is designed to meet the needs of the church

for pastors in mission and ministry opportunities where a pastor with a seminary degree may not be available. In order to be eligible for the SMP program, men must be serving in a ministry of a Lutheran congregation which desires their service as a pastor. They must be nominated for the program by their district president. Based upon this nomination and their previous ministry experiences, the men begin their academic work as concurrent vicars. After two years of vicarage and the completion of approximately half the program (eight courses at Fort Wayne and nine courses at St. Louis), they become, following certification by a seminary faculty, eligible for ordination in the specific ministry where they are serving. They are then required to take two more years of classes in order to complete the basic SMP program.

Program Goal—specific ministry pastors prepared for specific ministry contexts defined by congregations and districts

Year Program Began—SMP began with the 2008–09 academic year, fall quarter, as directed by the 2007 LCMS convention.³⁴

Special Church Needs That Prompted the Program—The need was to provide training in contexts for pastors where the fiscal situation or ministry context prevents the calling of a general ministry pastor. As successor to (and improvement over) Distance Education Leading to Ordination (DELTO), the SMP program meets the Synod's needs for contextual, in-ministry pastoral formation with improved curriculum and updated instructional technology (compared to DELTO). Men in the SMP program are ordained more quickly than under DELTO (after two years rather than six), seeking thereby 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, for instance, with the master of divinity or alternate routes 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 through 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 embodies many of the necessary spiritual and personal qualifications), the ministry context prevents him from relocating into a residential seminary program and provides advantages for pastoral formation within the context of service.

Total Number of Pastors Produced—Fort Wayne, 48; St. Louis, 163³⁵

Program Completion Rates—Approximately 85 percent of St. Louis students and approximately 90 percent of Fort Wayne students who started the program have completed it or are still in the program.

Financial Assistance—The CSL catalog states that “published tuition for SMP students will not generally be discounted.” It also states that “merit scholarships may be available, but are not guaranteed.” SMP students at CTS do not have access to financial aid resources. However, some SMP students may receive assistance from their LCMS district. The Siebert Lutheran Foundation may provide some assistance for students from Wisconsin.

Placement—initial (with a concurrent vicarage)

Call and Ordination—St. Louis, after nine courses with commitment to finish; Fort Wayne, after eight courses with commitment to finish

Ministry Context—open; specific contexts defined by district and congregation

Educational Prerequisite—entry-level competencies; ability to work at master's level; must have demonstrated basic proficiency in OT and NT content and Christian doctrine; must show potential for pastoral ministry to the satisfaction of his district president³⁶

Age—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.” They 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.”

Unique Admission Requirements—(1) presence necessary to support ongoing ministry; (2) nomination of district president and placement as vicar

Language and Level—English

Region—nationwide

Location of Instruction—distance education with required residential seminars and/or on-campus intensive courses.

Supervising Pastor Required—SMP students are assigned a pastor who mentors them while they are completing the program.

Vicarage/Internship—Formal vicarage during the first two years of the program. The vicarage grade appears on the transcript before ordination. No credit hours granted for vicarage.

Degree or Certificate—certificate

“Growth Path”—alternate route or master of divinity; there is also a nonresidential SMP alternate route continuation track.

Biblical Languages Required—None, but Greek is required for the SMP alternate route continuation track.

Curriculum Length—16 courses, 48 quarter hours, concurrent vicarage, followed by call and ordination approximately halfway through the program

Program Length—four years

Roster Status—specific ministry pastor; will continue to be supervised at the conclusion of the program until and unless completes alternate route or master of divinity degree

Attrition Rates—In general, 85 percent of students who begin the program at St. Louis reach ordination. At Fort Wayne, 55 of 61 students who began have completed or are still in the program (90 percent). In almost all cases, those who leave the programs have done so in the first two years (before ordination), due both to the workload and to vocational issues.

Other—Distance learning primarily; required residential seminars and/or on-campus intensive courses. Significant learning comes from student's local congregation or ministry setting experiences. Specific ministry pastors are always under supervision of a general pastor, even after completing the program.

Bilingual Pastoral Formation for Latinos—Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, is joining in partnership with Concordia College—New York and the Atlantic, New Jersey, and New England districts of the LCMS to offer Bilingual Pastoral Formation for Latinos (BPFL), a special track within the SMP program at Concordia Theological Seminary. The typical student will be a Latino selected

by one of the districts that are participating in the program and must receive a recommendation from their parish pastor. Upon completion of the program, graduates will serve as specific ministry pastors in the districts that supported them in the program. Courses are taught in the same manner as other SMP courses. Graduates of the BPFL will be ordained and placed on the roster of the Synod as specific ministry pastors because this is not a separate program but a track now folded into the SMP effort at Fort Wayne.

Past Programs

At various times in the past, the seminaries have developed other certificate programs, now no longer in existence, to help meet the changing needs of the church. For example, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, developed and implemented, for several years, a program to train pastors to serve in Arabic-speaking ministries to Muslims and former Muslims through POBLO (People of the Book Lutheran Outreach). Both seminaries were involved in DELTO, a distance certificate program with a concurrent vicarage. With the inauguration of SMP, DELTO was discontinued in 2009.

Section Three—Evaluations and Recommendations

General Observations re the Nature and Number of Our Means by Which Men Are Recruited and Prepared for the Pastoral Office

Since 2007, the Synod has had general pastors and specific ministry pastors. General pastors are considered to be broadly prepared for ministry and have no bylaw restrictions on where they may serve or the offices in the Synod to which they may be elected. Specific ministry pastors are restricted to a particular ministry context and always serve under the supervision of a general pastor wherever they may serve (see Bylaw 2.13.1). Presently, all of the various routes to the pastoral office make a man a general pastor in the Synod, except for the SMP program. Specific ministry pastors are ordained, but even after ordination and completion of their program they may not be elected to the Synod or district offices, nor serve as a delegate to a Synod convention or as a circuit visitor, and they always serve in their ministerial context under the supervision of a general pastor, authorized by their district president. *All* pastors (*including* specific ministry pastors) are nevertheless fully ordained pastors, carrying out the one ministry of Word and Sacrament. Whether a man serves as a general pastor or specific ministry pastor, the scriptural qualifications remain unchanged and identical (see 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1). Distinctions of roster status are made by human right because there are different levels and methods of education involved, and different circumstances under which men serve as pastors.

In our Synod, the current multiplicity of routes to the pastoral office was not always planned with intentional strategic forethought. Over the years, various routes developed organically to address immediate, pressing needs for the advancement of the Gospel. Someone in the church saw a need and began proactively to search for ways to meet that need. Sometimes there was a mandate by a Synod convention³⁹ for theological/pastoral formation for a particular ethnic or linguistic group (e.g., US Hispanic and Spanish-speaking populations)—a task fulfilled in an ongoing way since 1987 by the former Hispanic Institute of Theology (originally funded by the Synod at Concordia University Chicago), now the Center for Hispanic Studies located at (and funded by) Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. At other times, entrepreneurial individuals and institutions started programs for certain constituencies, working creatively and independently to serve particular groups or needs.⁴⁰ Whether working independently or in highly integrated coordination and collaboration, individuals and entities were able to create new avenues for the church to recruit and train

pastors for particular needs and times. A variety of means for the church to do this constitutes a blessing from God, and reflects the Synod's intense collective love for God's Word and Sacraments and a concomitant desire to proclaim and distribute the Gospel through His established Office of the Holy Ministry, while remaining absolutely faithful to the precepts given to us in the Holy Scriptures.

Yet the current multiplicity of routes to the pastoral office has raised issues requiring resolution: There may be duplication of effort when the two seminaries initiate similar but slightly different (and possibly overlapping) programs. (For instance, both seminaries now have certificate programs to enable Spanish-speaking men to become pastors, though the Fort Wayne program is being folded into that seminary's SMP effort.) There can be confusion regarding the role and nature of the various routes by which pastors are formed and trained. Something may arise regionally without the full knowledge of the whole Synod. There may be differing standards, conflicting rationales, and misunderstood purposes. A variety of routes may lead to significant differences in preparation or qualifications. When people perceive varying grades of pastor or different levels of education or preparation, a lack of cohesion may develop among the pastors and the people they serve. Our life together as a Synod thereby suffers. These are a few of the reasons the Synod adopted Res. 5-14A mandating this study. None of this is meant to impugn the motives of those who creatively began new programs. Nor is it meant to say that any one of our current routes should be abolished. We here simply point to some of the challenges inherent in a multiplicity of routes to the pastoral office.

A General Observation

The task force further notes that several of the certificate programs (e.g., EIIT, DIT, CHS, Bilingual Latino program as initially conceived) have academic and vicarage requirements similar to those of the newer SMP program (see chart in Appendix B for comparison). Yet these certificate programs presently make a man a general pastor of the Synod.⁴¹ An ordained man trained and certified in the SMP program, however, must always be supervised by a general pastor unless he completes further courses toward alternate route certification. This is true even though he has an education similar to those of other certificate programs that make a man a general pastor. All of these programs, with the exception of the more recent Bilingual Latino Pastoral Formation program at Fort Wayne, already existed years before the creation of the SMP programs. Therefore these certificate programs did not operate with the distinction between specific ministry pastor and general pastor that was established in the creation of the SMP effort. Nevertheless, the differences and disparities between the SMP and other non-MDiv/certificate programs (in some instances substantial) should somehow be addressed. In essence, the task force believes the Synod as a whole will benefit from a greater sense of clarity regarding the distinguishing characteristics of the various means by which men are raised up and prepared for the pastoral office.

General Recommendation

Taking all the above into consideration, the task force has concluded that all of these 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 therefore recommends that the Synod by resolution recognize that each of the means we have for the church to recruit and train men for the pastoral office is appropriate and needed.

Additional Fundamental Concerns

The life of the Church is found in the Word of God proclaimed and the Sacraments administered according to Christ's institution. This is how the Spirit gathers people so that they may receive the life of Christ in those means—and in turn participate in the giving of that same divine life, forgiveness, and salvation to others. The Church is ever inviting people into the worship of the triune God, for receiving Him in worship we receive the only true life there is. Congregations that are turned inward, concerned only with their own members, or interested only in current “outsiders” who resemble present members, will not be able to grow and thrive. As a Synod, we must help one another to be open to people unlike ourselves, to be ever inviting sinners to repentance and faith in Christ, whoever they are and wherever they are from. This is why we have several efforts to form pastors who are multilingual or who are from various ethnic immigrant groups and other minorities. This is fundamental to the life of the Church. Because it is fundamental, the Synod should do more to track, gather, and analyze data with respect to our district and congregational outreach efforts with, for instance, Hispanics and various other ethnic groups. What we value, we count.

Another concern is that the position of Executive Director for Pastoral Education should be filled as soon as possible.⁴² We need someone in this position continually to raise up before the Synod the necessity of a well-formed pastorate, as well as the needs of the various pastoral formation efforts outlined in this report. This individual will work with the Pastoral Formation Committee proposed below to help the seminaries coordinate programs and collaborate with each other more effectively. In order to survive and to serve the Synod in the best way possible, our two seminaries will need to increase their present efforts at coordination and collaboration even more. For instance, there could be theological working groups formed around theological education issues for Hispanics and other ethnic immigrants. Seminaries could coordinate courses, especially in their certificate programs, for the most effective use of professors and staff. Again, for example, the two current Hispanic programs, CHS and BPFL, could share courses and resources to increase efficiency.

Ethnic pastoral formation programs need to be effectively bilingual to serve the complex needs of immigrant congregations with multiple generations. First-generation immigrants appreciate the language of the homeland. Second generations are much more likely to be bilingual and third generation folks even more so. As a result, while the use of English as a second language (ESL) or another foreign language (e.g., Spanish) in certificate programs for ethnic immigrants may be acceptable for a time, we need to encourage the use of English in all routes to ministry. More than that, all of our pastors, no matter the route to ministry, must be trained and formed to the highest standards pastorally and academically. By the way, this is also why we must provide both realistic “growth paths” and effective encouragement for men trained in certificate programs to progress toward alternate route certification or a master of divinity degree. Even as we need all our routes to the pastoral office, we need to raise the standards for all, providing realistic means to do so. All of this takes funding, both for scholarships and for program support. Perhaps the Synod should undertake something like a “Global Seminary Initiative” to broaden the base of support for these efforts by our seminaries.

Specific Actions Recommended

The task force recognizes the need to ensure that all who are ordained are well-qualified. Greater agreement is needed regarding the core components of the curriculum requirements for all the

programs by which the church prepares her pastors. Greater coordination and collaboration between our seminaries on pastoral outcomes or core competencies would also be beneficial. To accomplish these goals, the task force specifically recommends the following actions for the Synod:

Recommendation 1—Define Clearly the Distinguishing Characteristics of Each of the Means by Which Pastors Are Recruited, Trained, and Formed

First of all, every pastor recruited, trained, and formed through all the various routes to ordination in our Synod is prepared for the one office Christ has given His Church, the office of preaching and administering the Sacraments for and on behalf of God's people. The basic qualifications laid out in Scripture (e.g., 1 Timothy 3:1–7) are the same for each. However, there are different levels of education and training involved for the various categories since there are different circumstances in which men serve as pastors. In other words, some routes to ordination prepare men who will focus on particular ministry contexts. Others, often with greater academic requirements, prepare men for broader, more general service across the Synod. The task force believes it will be helpful to explain more clearly the distinguishing characteristics of the various means by which pastors are raised up and formed by the Church. For the sake of clarity and understanding, we discern three general categories of pastoral preparation and formation:

1. Pastors Prepared for More General Service across the Synod
2. Pastors Prepared for Service in Particular Ministry Contexts
3. Specific Ministry Pastors

These categories of pastoral formation may be summarized as follows:

Category One—Pastors Prepared for More General Service across the Synod

Several of our traditional residential routes to ordination provide a level of education and pastoral formation that makes graduates of these programs eligible for call to any position for which the calling body may judge them competent. All other things being equal, the following residential routes provide the most thorough pastoral formation, the graduates of which are all considered general pastors.

Master of Divinity

Our two basic residential programs, one at each seminary, provide a depth of education and pastoral formation that prepares men for general service in the church. The MDiv residential programs are the **preferred routes** for most pastors, providing a fulsome three-year academic degree program, plus a full year of vicarage/internship. Certification is by the seminary faculty.

Mobility: may accept a call to any field of service for which the calling entity deems the man qualified

Supervision: under the general supervision of the district president with the assistance of the circuit visitors

Limitations: none beyond the general requirements for all pastors (conditions of membership) in the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws.

Residential Alternate Route

Both seminaries provide programs by which commissioned ministers of the Synod and/or men with significant parish experience may study for up to two years at a seminary (plus a full year of vicarage) and receive a theological diploma. Certification is by the respective seminary faculty.

Mobility: may accept a call to any field of service for which the calling entity deems the man qualified

Supervision: under the general supervision of the district president with the assistance of the circuit visitors

Limitations: none beyond the general requirements for all pastors (conditions of membership) in the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws

Colloquy

Colloquy receives men from other church bodies, most of whom already possess a master of divinity, who wish to become part of the LCMS. Depending on the circumstance, some further education in specifically Lutheran theology may be required. The Bylaws of the Synod have also provided that licensed deacons of the LCMS with at least 10 years experience may also apply, though often significant further education is required. Certification for all colloquy applicants is by the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry.

Mobility: may accept a call to any field of service for which the calling entity deems the man qualified

Supervision: under the general supervision of the district president with the assistance of the circuit visitors

Limitations: none beyond the general requirements for all pastors (conditions of membership) in the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws

Though levels of education vary somewhat, all the men certified through each of the above programs are prepared to accept a call to any field of service for which the calling entity deems the man qualified.

Category Two: Pastors Prepared for Service in Particular Ministry Contexts

Over the years, the Synod has also developed several certificate programs that prepare men for service as a pastor in particular ministry contexts. These programs offer a theological diploma certifying the man for the ministry of Word and Sacrament. While the Bylaws of the Synod place no restriction on where they may serve, these men are most often prepared for a particular context of ministry. They are pastors just the same as those in the previous category, but they have specialized training, generally for ethnic and cross-cultural ministries. There is also, of necessity, a greater use of distance learning and pastoral formation in context with these routes to ministry, compared to Category One.

Cross-Cultural Ministry Center

Under the aegis of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, men may study at Concordia University, Irvine, to receive an MA degree and a theological diploma. The vicarage is usually concurrent, and the purpose of the program is to prepare men for specialized cross-cultural ministry and church planting. Certification is by the St. Louis seminary faculty.

Mobility: may accept a call to any field of service for which the calling entity deems the man qualified

Supervision: under the general supervision of the district president with the assistance of the circuit visitors

Limitations: none beyond the general requirements for all pastors (conditions of membership) in the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws

Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, Center for Hispanic Studies, and Deaf Institute of Theology

These are all specialized programs with similar levels of education and formation. Men study by means of a combination of distance learning and on-campus intensives. Each student works with a mentor/supervisor as long as he is in the program. Certification is by the respective seminary faculty.

Mobility: They may accept a call to any field of service but men with this training are normally limited by language or ethnicity to such special ministries.

Supervision: As all pastors, these men are under the general supervision of the district president with the assistance of the circuit visitors. In addition, such men are supervised by a mentor/supervising pastor while in the training program. After graduation, some level of ongoing specific supervision generally remains, whether by a district mission board or mission executive or by a senior pastor (who must be a general pastor) in a multi-staff situation.

Limitations: Technically, there are no limitations beyond the general requirements for all pastors (conditions of membership) in the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws.

Degree or Certificate

What does this mean? All graduates of all the programs listed above receive a certificate or theological diploma certifying them for the ministry of Word and Sacrament. MDiv graduates also receive a professionally recognized academic degree, the master of divinity. Cross-Cultural Ministry Center graduates and some qualifying graduates of the Center for Hispanic Studies receive the MA degree. All the routes to ministry in Categories One and Two prepare general pastors of the Synod (see Bylaw 2.13.1) though men prepared for particular ethnic contexts usually remain in that context.

Category Three: Specific Ministry Pastors

Seminary Programs for Specific Ministry Pastors

The SMP program at both seminaries, approved by the Synod in 2007, prepares men in context for specific ministries as determined by congregations and districts. This is a special distance-learning program with unique limitations. Certification is by the respective seminary faculty.

Mobility: Specific ministry pastors are 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 the district president.

Supervision: He shall serve under the supervision of his district president *and* another pastor who is not a specific ministry pastor. Such individualized supervision will continue until a specific ministry pastor completes a program for alternate route or master of divinity certification as a general pastor.

Limitations: 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. He is not eligible to serve as a voting delegate to a national convention of the Synod. He may not hold elected or appointed office on the district or national Synod level. He may not supervise vicars or serve as a circuit visitor.

Bilingual Pastoral Formation for Latinos: This nascent program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, is a special track for men who speak both Spanish and English within the SMP program at that seminary.

Colloquy to the Specific Ministry Pastor Roster

Should the Synod adopt in 2016 the basic recommendations of the 4-06A Task Force, the specific ministry pastor roster will also include a cadre of pastors certified for call and placement through a special regional colloquy program. The purpose of this effort will be to certify, call, and ordain as pastors licensed lay deacons presently functioning as *de facto* pastors. The Synod will need to decide whether to continue this program in some form for the future.

Summary of Recommendation 1

Specifically, to summarize Recommendation 1, the task force encourages the Synod to adopt by resolution the language above clarifying the three categories outlined: (1) Pastors Prepared for More General Service across the Synod; (2) Pastors Prepared for Service in Particular Ministry Contexts; and (3) Specific Ministry Pastors. All of these several means by which the Synod recruits, trains, and forms pastors are both appropriate and needed for the life and mission of the Church, but the Synod also needs to have the highest possible standards for all of them, both academically and spiritually.

Continuing Education

All pastors need continuing education, but to these ends and as a corollary to this recommendation, especially specific ministry pastors and pastors with only a certificate-level of education will need to be encouraged to obtain further education to increase their knowledge and to improve pastoral skills and abilities. **Section Five of this report outlines a “growth path” concept to accomplish this goal.**

Recommendation 2—Establish a Pastoral Formation Committee

To provide for general oversight of the various means by which men are raised up and prepared for the pastoral office, the task force recommends that the Synod establish a Pastoral Formation Committee. Why? Pastoral ministry has never been easy, but it is going to become even more complex, more demanding, more in need of what our seminaries can teach. Thus, we must be strong advocates for rigorously and thoroughly training our clergy. We also recognize the need to provide for greater coordination and collaboration between our two seminaries.

In particular, the task force recommends that this Pastoral Formation Committee work with the seminaries to bring all non-MDiv routes to ordination under a common set of pastoral competencies and outcomes. As the seminaries conduct ongoing reviews and revisions of their respective curricula, the task force recommends that the outcomes and standards for the various non-master-of-divinity tracks be fully evaluated against those of the MDiv curriculum. Those responsible for each of our pastoral formation programs must coordinate and collaborate in working toward this goal for the sake of our unity and mission as a Synod. A Pastoral Formation Committee could be one means (though not the only one) to ensure that similar pastoral outcomes are met in formation programs across the Synod. Why a special committee? Prior to the restructuring of the Synod in 2010 (mandated by the 2010 convention), the Board for Pastoral Education and the Office of Pastoral Education in St. Louis provided the necessary structure and accountability for this to take place. Following the Synod's restructuring in 2010, there has been no Board for Pastoral Education. Now, the “new” (as of 2010) Office of Pastoral Education must work through the two respective seminaries' boards of regents. Each board of regents will naturally make its own institution a priority. Going forward, the task force believes it will be important, especially in regard to whatever multiplicity of routes to the pastoral office we deem necessary, that there be an entity ensuring that the seminaries *do* coordinate and collaborate with respect to these various programs. The task force does not believe, however, that the Synod needs to reinstitute a special board elected by the Synod in convention to accomplish this, but that a committee appointed along the lines suggested below will be able effectively to accomplish these goals.

Therefore, in light of all the above, the task force herewith proposes the creation of this Pastoral Formation Committee to oversee

all the means by which the church recruits, trains, and forms ordained pastors. Outlined below are the responsibilities of this proposed committee:

[The Bylaws of the Synod state:]

3.4.3.8 The Chief Mission Officer shall, on behalf of the President, provide leadership, coordination, and oversight for pre-seminary education programs, seminary education, and post-seminary continuing education, and by providing advocacy for pastoral education and health within the Synod.

The task force recommends that the following bylaw establishing a Pastoral Formation Committee be inserted at an appropriate place in the Bylaws of the Synod:

A Pastoral Formation Committee

Assisting the Chief Mission Officer, a Pastoral Formation Committee shall serve the members of the Synod by approving any new routes leading to ordination and by reviewing, assessing, coordinating, supporting, and making suggestions for improvement of all existing non-colloquy routes leading to ordination in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, including seminary and pre-seminary education programs. Seminaries and CUS schools finally determine all curricular matters (e.g., outcomes, specific course content, credit hours, schedules, manner of instruction, textbooks, and the like). The Pastoral Formation Committee monitors and receives general reports regarding all the routes to the pastoral office and fosters coordination and collaboration among them.⁴³ The chief goal of the Pastoral Formation Committee will be to ensure that similar pastoral outcomes are met in all pastoral formation programs across the Synod. The Pastoral Formation Committee will coordinate its work with the SMP Committee mandated by 2013 Res. 5-03E.

The Pastoral Formation Committee shall consist of these members:

1. Chairman: The Chief Mission Officer or a staff member reporting to the Chief Mission Officer appointed in fulfillment of his duties under Bylaw 3.4.3.8 and designated by the CMO as chairman of the committee.
2. One member from each board of regents of the seminaries appointed by the President of the Synod
3. The academic dean or provost of each seminary
4. Each seminary president or his delegate
5. The Chief Mission Officer of the Synod (if not already serving as chairman)
6. The Executive Director, Program Director, or head of each of the Certificate Routes to Ordination program (advisory, nonvoting)

The Pastoral Formation Committee shall meet on a seminary campus at least once per year. Additional meetings shall be determined by the chairman in consultation with the committee.

The Synod in convention should instruct this Pastoral Formation Committee and the Executive Director for Pastoral Education to consider the issues outlined in this report the top priority.

Recommendation 3—Clarifying Eligibility for Colloquy

The task force recommends that eligibility for regular colloquy be clarified in the Synod Bylaws by the inclusion of language from the Policy Manual for the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry regarding commissioned ministers and LCMS laymen who obtain master of divinity degrees from non-LCMS seminaries. In other words, the Bylaws of the Synod should state that, under normal circumstances, commissioned ministers and lifelong LCMS laymen who obtain an MDiv from non-Lutheran schools will be directed to one of our two seminaries to design an alternate route for them rather than apply for colloquy.

Recommendation 4—Coordination with the 4-06A Task Force Proposals

The task force **recommends that the floor committee** responsible for the reports of both the 4-06A Task Force and the 5-14A Task Force **bring to the Synod a coordinated set of proposals** combining the recommendations of both task forces. Both task forces also believe the members of the Synod would do well to discuss and to study carefully the theology of call and ordination to the pastoral office outlined in this report and in that of the 4-06A Task Force.

Excursus One: The 5-14A Task Force believes that the preceding recommendations (1, 2 & 3) fit very well into the following two recommendations of the 4-06A Task Force:

Recommendation 2 (Further Utilization of SMP Program with Financial Support) *The [4-06A Task Force] recommends that the Synod's SMP program be fully utilized since it has been developed as an approach to theological education especially for those settings where finances and/or geography are obstacles to preparation. The Synod must ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any eligible candidate from participating in the SMP.*

Recommendation 3 (Further Utilization of Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology [EIIT], Center for Hispanic Studies [CHS], and Cross-Cultural Ministry Center) *The [4-06A Task Force] recommends that Synod's EIIT, CHS, and Cross-Cultural Ministry Center be fully utilized to supply training for pastors in cross-cultural settings since they have been developed to provide a means for theological education especially for those from various cultures and backgrounds. The Synod must ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any eligible candidate from participating in these programs.*

Excursus Two: The task force responding to 2013 Res. 4-06A regarding licensed lay deacons is proposing a supplement to the colloquy program that will provide that licensed lay deacons in Word and Sacrament pastoral ministry will be required to undergo colloquy and ultimately be called and ordained to the roster of specific ministry pastors. Note, however, that the proposal may be temporary and may come to an end after all those eligible have come through the program. The regular SMP program at the seminaries will continue and will need to be expanded to respond to the needs heretofore covered by licensed lay deacons. Financial resources will need to be provided as well (see the Report of the Res. 4-06A Task Force).

Recommendation 5—Task Force Recommendations re Improvements to the SMP Program

Several recommendations are included below, but first an explanation:

The Seminary Specific Ministry Pastor Programs

The SMP program was created by the Synod at its 2007 convention by the passage of Res. 5-01B. It has since been reaffirmed by both the 2010 and 2013 conventions. Extensive recounting of the rationale, history, and design of the program has been reported in two significant documents: “The Specific Ministry Pastor Program: A White Paper Presented to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by The Specific Ministry Pastor Committee of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod” (Mar. 15, 2012) and “Report to the President: Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Task Force” (Sept. 1, 2012). Therefore, that information will not be repeated here. Instead, this task force will report only its own observations and recommendations for moving forward with this important program in light of certain questions which have arisen and are within the parameters of this task force’s own mandate.

The Concept and Purpose of the Program

SMP was adopted by the Synod to provide quality theological and practical training for men to serve as pastors primarily in settings “where full-time ministry cannot be maintained,” and also in such specific ministries “as church planter, staff pastor, and others as needs arise” (2007 Res. 5-01B). As the preamble and WHEREASES of 5-01B made clear, the SMP program was also intended to provide these pastoral services in ways that were faithful to Art. XIV of the Augsburg Confession (“It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call”), in preference to such services being provided by lay deacons, as was being done in some places. More recently, the 2013 Res. 5-04B resolved that specific ministry pastors *not* be used at “sites which could reasonably be expected to support a general pastor or sites where a minister of religion—commissioned could fulfill the duties.”⁴⁵

Thus it is the goal of the SMP programs of the two seminaries to provide excellent training within the much more limited curricular opportunities than a full residential program would allow. However, it is also evident from 5-04B that, unlike the seminaries’ residential master of divinity or alternate route programs, the SMP program is not intended to be a route followed by a man who “aspires to the office” of pastor (1 Timothy 3:1) as his full-time, lifelong vocation. (In this sense, the SMP program is also unlike the programs of our Synod’s institutions which prepare men and women for the various auxiliary offices of commissioned ministers, all of which are intended to be full-time, lifelong callings. This consideration also sets the SMP program apart from the programs of the Center for Hispanic Studies, the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, the Deaf Institute of Theology, and the Cross-Cultural Ministry Center at Irvine.) Rather, specific ministry pastors are ordinarily men recruited and trained for the pastoral office within and for a specific ministry context. Often, though not always, they are serving part-time and/or bi-vocationally, earning much of their income from other employment. Some come to SMP in or near retirement from another vocation.⁴⁶

SMP training takes place within a specific ministry context, as defined by the congregation in consultation with the district president. Throughout this training, SMP students serve under the close supervision of a mentor pastor and his district president. This mentor pastor is also the formal vicarage supervisor, with the same expectations for oversight and responsibilities as an MDiv vicarage supervisor. In fact, at both seminaries, the vicarage programs for SMP, master of divinity, and every route to ordination are overseen by the same office. The training and expectations are the same for vicarage supervisors in all programs.

Throughout his training, an SMP student serves in a place of ministry under the close supervision of a mentor pastor and his district president. Simultaneously, he takes seminary classes, some of which are on the seminary campus as one-week intensives, with the rest taken by distance.⁴⁷ Other reports may also be required. The program will ordinarily be completed in four years. The first two of these years also constitute a vicarage. After these first two years, the student may be eligible for ordination as a specific ministry pastor, still under the supervision of his mentor and district president, and while continuing to take the required seminary classes. Thus the four-year program always involves simultaneous classes and practical work in the ministry context.

Regarding the preceding, the task force notes the following:

The resolution establishing the SMP program in 2007 made clear the desire to conform to Augsburg XIV, “that nobody should publicly

teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call.” Thus the SMP program was intended to replace programs that fell short of that confession in providing pastoral services.

A question has been raised as to whether the Synod was wise in designating the SMP program for preparing church planters. (The 2013 “Report to the President” recommends “not using it for the planting of churches.”) This task force notes that church planting may be a calling that demands *even more* training than does ministry in an established setting, not the more limited curriculum of the SMP program. For example, establishing a new congregation requires making new policy decisions on virtually every matter, many of them significantly theological (matters of worship, admission to the Lord’s Supper, and so on), while a call to an established parish allows a new graduate to draw upon the congregation’s experience and previous decisions. On the other hand, in the case of a daughter congregation or a satellite situation, a specific ministry pastor under supervision should be expected to have the resources and experience of the mother congregation and supervising pastor on which to draw.

Further, the task force notes that 2013 Res. 5-04B, while not precluding the use of SMP for staff pastors, does significantly restrict it; specific ministry pastors should be used in such situations only when the congregation is unable to support the second pastor and a commissioned minister could not fulfill the responsibilities.

Admission to the Program

Given the concept and purpose of the program, SMP is to begin with a context (a place in need of pastoral ministry), rather than beginning with a man aspiring to serve. A congregation identifies a need appropriate for a specific ministry pastor, then chooses a layman to be put forth as a candidate for the SMP program. (In fact, in some cases, a man may already have been pressed into service to address a local ministry need and now requires training, certification, call, and placement into the pastoral office as a specific ministry pastor.) The intent of the program is such that the student does not choose to put himself forward, but is approached by the congregation. As already noted, an individual wishing to offer himself for full-time service in the ministry should plan to attend the residential program of one of our seminaries, because the residential programs offer broader and deeper theological and practical training to address the diverse challenges and demands of pastoral ministry.

The actual application process begins with the sponsoring congregation, prospective student, and perhaps a prospective mentor pastor contacting their district president. If the district president approves the ministry context as appropriate for an SMP candidate and approves the candidate and his mentor pastor, the application and supporting paperwork can be prepared with the help of the seminaries’ admission staffs. The various application documents are collected by the district office and submitted by the district president to the seminary admission office, ideally as one completed file. Applicants must also demonstrate basic competency in biblical knowledge, theological knowledge, and ministry skills.⁴⁹

The task force notes the importance of the duty 2013 Res. 5-04B assigns to district presidents: in recommending men for admission to the SMP program, they must properly consider whether the site at which a man will serve his vicarage and ultimately his call conforms to the resolution’s guidelines.

Course work, Ordination, and Completion of the Program

The four years in the program include a total of 16 courses, including both on-campus intensives and courses taught entirely by distance. As stated above, for the first two years of the SMP program

the student is a vicar, assigned to serve in the congregation to which he will eventually be called.

Of crucial importance throughout the program is the involvement of the supervising pastor (mentor). It is essential that the mentor pastor commit to actively directing the student, not only in the practical activities of pastoral service but also in the academic work of his courses. The mentor should be involved in the courses in various ways such as weekly required discussion of course content and assignments with the student. The program assumes mentors are required to attend with the student the new student/mentor orientation (just as new vicarage supervisors in the residential programs are required to attend a supervisors conference at one of the seminaries).

Once a student has completed the first eight (or nine) courses (depending on the seminary); has received a favorable report from his vicarage supervisor and mentor, as well as his district president; has been requested in call documents issued by the congregation and approved by the district president; and has passed a theological interview and been certified by the seminary faculty, he is eligible for call and placement, followed by ordination. (A number of more specific steps in this certification, placement, and ordination process are required but are not detailed here.) After ordination, the student must complete the final two years of the program in order to remain on the clergy roster. If he fails to do so, his district president is required to remove him from the roster of the Synod (2007 Res. 5-01B).

The task force has noted some concerns with this model:

Most obviously, ordination after just eight or nine courses is an extremely brief route to the ministry. St. Paul warns Timothy, “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands” (1 Timothy 5:22). Moreover, his admonition that pastors be “able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24) is a matter not primarily of innate talent, but of knowledge and understanding of the whole doctrine of the church (1 Timothy 1:3; 6:2–3; 2 Timothy 2:15; Titus 1:9; 2:1)—no small assignment. While, of course, Scripture never prescribes a curriculum or time frame for training to teach, it may be helpful to recognize that eight (or nine) courses is the equivalent (in terms of the number of academic courses) of only about the first half of the first year of the residential seminary curriculum.⁵⁰ It is also worth noting that each of the other certificate programs (EIIT, CHS, etc.) provide for ordination only upon completion of the full programs (16 or more courses). This is also why specific ministry pastors remain under supervision and are restricted to a specific ministry.

Moreover, such a brief curriculum prior to ordination necessitates certain compromises. The curricula of the seminaries provide, of course, to give students a foundational exposure to all the teachings necessary to take the ordination vows and be faithful to them (such as to subscribe unconditionally to the Lutheran Confessions and faithfully and pastorally admit to the Lord’s Supper). However, at each of the two seminaries, the more in-depth course content in two or more of the following areas is not studied *until after* eligibility for ordination: the nature of the Scriptures, Old and New Testament theology, the church, and the Lord’s Supper. In other words, men may be ordained (and thus be responsible for, among countless other matters, admission to the Lord’s Table) without the more extensive study in the formal principles of our theology, matters of fellowship, or even the Sacrament itself. These do not represent oversights in the two seminaries’ curricular designs, but rather inherent challenges in preparing men for pastoral ministry with such time and curricular limitations.

Finally, a man’s failing to complete, for whatever reason, his post-ordination courses would create a most troublesome situation. By resolution of the Synod, the pastor must be removed from the

clergy roster. However, he would still have a valid call to his place of service.⁵¹ This could make for a difficult problem for the district president and the congregation to resolve together. One of the conditions of membership is that congregations must call and be served only by pastors on the Synod clergy roster.

After the Program: Limitations, Mobility, and General Ministry Status

After completing the full four-year SMP program, the student has, at present, several options:

- He may remain on the roster as a specific ministry pastor permanently. This means he will always be required to serve under the supervision of a general ministry pastor (such as his mentor), and he is limited in that he may not serve as a circuit visitor, as a delegate to a Synod convention, or as a supervisor to a vicar. Further, “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” (Bylaw 2.13.1). That is, the specific ministry pastor is ineligible for calls to any other kind of context unless he completes one of the following options.⁵²
- He may enroll in the master of divinity program of one of the two seminaries. By completing his SMP program, he will be eligible for MDiv equivalents of certain course work. Earning the MDiv will require additional residential time at the seminary, likely two years. Upon earning the MDiv degree, he will be eligible for general ministry pastor status on the clergy roster and will be eligible to serve as a circuit visitor, as a delegate to a Synod convention, and as a supervisor to a vicar, as well as being eligible for call to a new location and being eligible to hold an elected or appointed office in the Synod or district assigned by the Bylaws to a pastor.
- He may enroll in the alternate route (AR) program of one of the two seminaries. An AR certification (which does not include an academic degree) may require residential time at the seminary, likely one year. However, both seminaries also offer the AR certificate by distance education and/or intensive courses on campus (requiring up to four and a half or five years). A student earning the AR certificate receives general pastor status on the clergy roster and is eligible to serve as a circuit visitor, as a delegate to a Synod convention, and as a supervisor to a vicar, as well as being eligible for call to a new location.

Regarding the above, “After the Program,” the task force notes the following:

Encouraging specific ministry pastors to further their training and move to general pastor status should be a chief goal. The Synod’s 2013 resolution making continuing education mandatory for *all* pastors (Res. 5-08B, To Establish Standard for Continuing Education of Pastors) underscores that the pastoral ministry requires more than entry-level understanding and skills—beyond even the MDiv degree and practical experience. The specific ministry pastor should be encouraged to see his first step in continuing education to be the MDiv or alternate route.

The Synod Bylaws indicate that a specific ministry pastor may not move to a new call which is not somehow equivalent to the “specific ministry context” for which he was first accepted into the program and then certified “as determined by his district president.” What constitutes such equivalence? The Synod has made clear that “the district presidents 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” (2013 Res. 5-04B). Therefore it seems apparent, for example, that a specific ministry pastor serving as an associate could not be called to be sole or senior pastor of that same congregation, since that congregation had been able to support a general pastor (the previous senior

pastor). What other guidelines should be established for appropriate equivalent “specific ministry contexts”? The emphasis needs to be on the ministry needs of the congregation.

Now we therefore proceed to the particulars of the following:

Recommendation 6—Specific Improvements Recommended for the SMP Program

The task force recommends the following specific improvements for the SMP program be considered, either by the 2016 Synod in convention or the SMP Committee established by the 2013 convention, as appropriate.

1. The task force joins the Synod’s conventions of 2007, 2010, and 2013, as well as the President’s SMP Task Force, in recommending that the SMP program continue to be a distinct, recognized route to the ministry of the LCMS. It is ideally suited to provide certain ministry contexts (e.g., congregations unable to afford a full-time pastor) with men who do “aspire to the office” of pastor (1 Timothy 3:1), but for whom the office of pastor will most likely not be their full-time, lifelong vocation. The 2016 convention and/or the Synod’s SMP Committee will need carefully to consider the following recommendations:
2. In keeping with the concept and purpose of the SMP program, the task force strongly encourages district presidents to adhere carefully to the guidelines of 2013 Res. 5-04B that specific ministry pastors not be used at “sites which could reasonably be expected to support a general pastor or sites where a minister of religion—commissioned could fulfill the duties.” For example, a specific ministry pastor should serve as a staff pastor at a congregation only when that congregation cannot support an additional pastor. Should the senior pastor leave that congregation, the specific ministry pastor would ordinarily not be eligible to be called to be the sole pastor or senior pastor as long as the congregation remained able to support one pastor. (For the specific ministry pastor to become sole or senior pastor would also be inappropriate because that would be a different specific ministry context than his certified context as assistant or associate.)
3. The task force recommends that the SMP Committee established by 2013 Res. 5-03E work closely with the Synod’s Council of Presidents to clarify further other parameters that might constitute or limit “specific ministry contexts.” The Synod needs to establish clearer definitions and boundaries for these contexts, but recognizing also the right of the congregation to govern its own internal affairs.
4. Specific ministry pastors are always to be under the supervision of a general pastor, active or retired. The task force recommends that the SMP Committee work closely with the Synod’s Council of Presidents also to establish a mechanism to ensure ongoing supervision of the specific ministry pastor by a general pastor throughout the duration of his calling as a specific ministry pastor (e.g., when the first mentor/supervisor accepts another call or retires), and clarify the duties of both the supervising pastor and the district president once the student has completed the 16 courses of the SMP program. In other words, the nature and expectations of this supervision need to be more clearly defined. The Synod needs to assure itself that specific ministry pastors (because of their level of education and experience) are both supervised and adequately supported in their work by an experienced general pastor.
5. Of crucial importance throughout the program is the supervising pastor/mentor. It is essential that the mentor pastor commit to actively directing the student, not only in the practical activities of pastoral service but also in the academic work of his courses. Mentors should be required to attend with the student at least the first on-campus experience for orientation and awareness of the course delivery process (just as new vicarage supervisors in the residential programs are required to attend a supervisors conference at one of the seminaries). Mentors must be involved with their students in each academic course by regular activities as required in the course assignments (weekly journals involving discussion questions with one’s mentor). The name of the mentor/supervising pastor for each specific ministry pastor should be

included on the Synod website in the “church worker locator” for that pastor.

6. The task force recommends that specific ministry pastors be used in church planting only when the new ministry will be maintained for at least its first five years as a “satellite” location of an established (“mother”) congregation under the close supervision of that established congregation and its pastor. This recommendation embraces the conclusion reached by the President’s SMP Task Force (2013 “Report to the President”) that church planting does indeed require at least as extensive (and perhaps more extensive) theological training than does an established ministry context. On the other hand, a specific ministry pastor, having been identified and trained in a local context, may have familiarity with that context, which is actually an advantage to planting a new ministry in that setting. Therefore, specific ministry pastors may be appropriate in church planting if but only if the “mother” congregation and its pastor give real and meaningful guidance in the formation of the new ministry’s structure and policies such as worship practices, admission to the Lord’s Supper, and requirements for membership. In all other church-planting situations, prospective church planters would be better served by training through the mission tracks at our seminaries.
7. The task force recommends that general pastor status be viewed and announced as a goal ultimately to be pursued, if possible, by all students entering the SMP program. Congregations sponsoring SMP students should therefore be aware from the very beginning that in the future they will be encouraged to work creatively to support their pastors’ progress toward the MDiv degree or alternate route certification (perhaps through distance learning). Such support would include time away for terms of residential study, released time while at home for distance courses, financial assistance with educational expenses, and so on. Several of the recommendations above in section 3 apply here as well. For instance, the goal or “growth path” for all non-MDiv pastors should be to attain at least the level of the alternate route.
8. The task force recommends that the SMP program be modified to defer ordination until all 16 courses have been completed (as each of the other certificate programs requires completion of its full course work prior to ordination). The rationale for this recommendation is given under “Course work, Ordination, and Completion of the Program” above. This modification implies that congregations, supervising pastors, and district presidents will assign the SMP students only those duties appropriate to vicars. For example, a vicar is not ordinarily expected to be the celebrant for Holy Communion. If, however, the district president and congregation believe that unnecessary hardship would ensue by delaying ordination until all courses are completed, the district president and congregation together should be able to request the seminary faculty to certify the student for call and ordination after the first two years of SMP course work. In all cases, the student will complete all 16 courses of the program. If he does not, he must resign from the roster. Pastors shepherd congregations, and to function as a pastor, one must be clearly set apart by the Church as a pastor.
9. In general, the task force recommends that all members of the Synod be asked to recognize the SMP program as replacing all programs preparing laymen to provide public teaching, preaching, and administration of the Sacraments, since the SMP program leads to regular call and ordination in keeping with Augsburg Confession Art. XIV, while programs for lay service do not. Likewise, the task force recommends that all members of the Synod agree that laymen not continue to provide pastoral services, but rather that those serving in such capacities seek ordination through colloquy or the SMP program.
10. The task force recognizes that these recommendations for the SMP program will have to be reconciled to and folded into the recommendations of the 2013 Res. 4-06A Task Force for resolving the issue of licensed lay deacons involved in providing pastoral ministry (Word and Sacrament) in congregations. This will be the task of the 2016 Convention Floor Committee.

Section Four—Necessary Bylaw Changes

Our recommendations for bylaw changes fall into two categories: (1) the establishment of a Pastoral Formation Committee, and (2) adjustments to the Bylaws regarding colloquy to clarify eligibility for colloquy.

1. Suggested bylaw changes to establish Pastoral Formation Committee:

Under the bylaws regarding the duties of the Chief Mission Officer, add the following, to be designated as Bylaw 3.4.3.9.

Proposed Bylaw 3.4.3.9:

Assisting the Chief Mission Officer, a Pastoral Formation Committee shall serve the members of the Synod by approving any new routes leading to ordination and by reviewing, assessing, coordinating, supporting, and making suggestions for improvement of all existing non-colloquy routes leading to ordination in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, including seminary and pre-seminary education programs. Seminaries and CUS schools finally determine all curricular matters, e.g., outcomes, specific course content, credit hours, schedules, manner of instruction, text books, and the like. The Pastoral Formation Committee monitors and receives general reports regarding all the routes to the pastoral office and fosters coordination and collaboration among them. The chief goal of the Pastoral Formation Committee is to ensure that similar pastoral outcomes are met in all pastoral formation programs across the Synod. The Pastoral Formation Committee will coordinate its work with the SMP Committee (mandated by 2013 Res. 5-03E).

The Pastoral Formation Committee shall consist of these members:

1. Chairman: The Chief Mission Officer or a staff member reporting to the Chief Mission Officer appointed in fulfillment of his duties under Bylaw 3.4.3.8 and designated by the CMO as chairman of the committee.
2. One member from each board of regents of the seminaries appointed by the President of the Synod
3. The academic dean or provost of each seminary
4. Each seminary president or his delegate
5. The Chief Mission Officer of the Synod (if not already serving as chairman)
6. The Executive Director, Program Director, or head of each of the Certificate Routes to Ordination programs (advisory, nonvoting)

The Pastoral Formation Committee shall meet on a seminary campus at least once per year. Additional meetings shall be determined by the chairman in consultation with the committee.

2. Bylaws clarifying eligibility for colloquy

Amend the Bylaws of the Synod by adding after Bylaw 3.10.2.2 the following new paragraphs, to be numbered 3.10.2.3, 3.10.2.4, and 3.10.2.5, respectively.

- 3.10.2.3 Applicants for the ordained ministry who are eligible for colloquy under the Colloquy Committee’s published policies may make application directly to the committee. Other applicants for the ordained ministry, such as ministers of religion—commissioned, laymen of a special ethnic or linguistic group, and laymen who have fulfilled at least ten years of significant service in a congregation, shall be eligible for the residential alternate routes program of one of the seminaries and will make application directly to the seminaries.
- 3.10.2.4 LCMS laymen and commissioned ministers who receive a master of divinity or equivalent degree from a non-LCMS seminary shall seek certification for call and placement in the Synod by participating in the residential alternate routes

program of one of the seminaries of the Synod, if otherwise eligible for admission to the seminary.

- 3.10.2.5 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.

Section Five—Use the “Growth Path” Concept to Strengthen Ongoing Pastoral Formation

Christian formation is a lifelong journey through which the Holy Spirit shapes believers to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Such journey begins with Christian initiation into Christ’s Church through Holy Baptism and is nourished throughout the seasons of life by our hearing of God’s Word and our eating and drinking of the Lord’s body and blood in His Supper.

The “growth path” concept describes Christian formation as an invitation to lifelong learning. Along such path, we include more specifically that spectrum of theological formation experiences oriented toward the preparation of Lutheran pastors. Such a spectrum may include a growth path that begins with pre-seminary level formation, continues with admission to a seminary pastoral-formation program leading to ordination, and is enriched through continuing education activities throughout the pastor’s life in ministry.

Seminaries provide ample opportunities for students in pastoral ministry programs to strengthen their formation through the fulfillment of additional learning activities and requirements during their time on campus. For instance, MDiv students take electives that deepen their knowledge and skills in a particular area of theological inquiry. Some students hone their theological skills by doing additional work toward a STM (master of sacred theology) degree before receiving their call to pastoral ministry. Seminaries also have offices of continuing education that regularly offer workshops for pastors to grow in their theological and pastoral skills.

The “growth path” concept must also be applied to non-MDiv routes to ordination. Seminaries should clearly lay out growth path options to non-MDiv students upon admission to their programs, encouraging them to consider seriously doing work beyond their basic course of studies. Designing, implementing, and funding curricular growth path opportunities for students in non-MDiv routes to ordination will deepen and strengthen their formation for ministry across the Synod.

Growth paths may take different forms. For instance, the SMP program already offers a path to move a student from specific ministry pastor to general pastor roster status through the completion of additional academic requirements. Both seminaries offer a series of courses for specific ministry pastors who, after finishing the first number of required courses, are encouraged to complete the equivalent of the alternate route residential program. Completing this growth path enables a specific ministry pastor to reach the goal of becoming a general pastor of the Synod.

The growth path concept can be implemented by asking seminaries to design nondegree curriculum options that will allow qualifying non-MDiv students who have successfully completed their certificate programs (i.e., CHS, EIIT, DIT, Bilingual Formation for Latinos) to engage in an additional course of studies that leads to the equivalent of an alternate route program. This is a worthy goal that seminaries should lay out for certificate students as a joyful possibility even as they begin their studies. The issue of funding the growth path must be addressed if such growth path is to be implemented.

In establishing a growth path toward alternate route equivalency,

the distinctiveness of each program is retained. Yet a balance is struck between the appropriate uniqueness of the programs for serving the church and the goal of moving all qualifying students in such programs toward an equivalent course of studies. In designing growth paths, seminaries will determine what alternate route equivalency is for certificate program students who are able to move along this path.

A degree growth path may also be considered in addition to requirements for pastoral certification for qualifying students. It should be noted that some degree paths already exist. The Cross-Cultural Ministry Center (CMC) program offers a certification plus MA option for students who hold a bachelor’s degree. CHS students who have a bachelor’s degree (or its Latin American *licenciatura* equivalent) can complement their certificate studies by applying to an MA program delivered in the Spanish language. Moreover, both seminaries encourage qualifying specific ministry pastors to continue studies toward an MDiv degree as another means to attain the goal of becoming a general pastor.

Through continuing education, the growth path concept can also be implemented for certificate students who are not able to complete a degree program (MA or MDiv) or the equivalent of a residential alternate route program. Reasons for not being able to follow a path toward a degree option or an alternate route equivalency may include limitations in fulfilling US accreditation degree ATS (Association of Theological Schools) standards, bridging US academic standards vis-à-vis majority world standards, negotiating formation in a second language (e.g., ESL in EIIT program), or staffing and course offering options for programs delivered in a language other than English (e.g., CHS). Those seminary students who for the reasons stated above cannot obtain the goal of a degree or alternate route option during their course of studies at the seminary can still be put on a growth path toward an alternate route equivalency delivered through Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Seminaries can implement a CEU growth path for such students that meet the necessary formation outcomes.

The “growth path” concept helps us winsomely to see pastoral formation as a process of growth in pastoral excellence that is flexible enough to attend to various non-MDiv programs’ unique challenges and opportunities, while also providing effective and clearly laid out ways of nourishing and strengthening pastoral formation for students in all programs. Moreover, a growth path framework to pastoral formation prevents us from seeing non-MDiv programs as half-empty glasses, and instead invites us to see such programs as half-full glasses—namely, as means to certify students for pastoral ministry who can also continue to grow on the journey of pastoral formation through additional educational experiences and requirements.

Yet another way of implementing the growth path concept to strengthen and deepen the formation of students across all non-MDiv routes to ordination (both nondegree and degree) is to make sure that, as a minimum entry-level competency for ministry across programs, these students can successfully attain pastoral formation outcomes equivalent to those expected of the residential alternate route students. Seminaries can make curricular decisions on the best and most realistic ways for students to attain such outcomes through each non-MDiv program.

Therefore, such attainment does not necessarily mean that all students will take the same courses, but it does assume that all students across programs will meet core competencies across all programs that offer the Synod a solid biblically and confessionally formed pastor. The unity of our life together as a Synod will benefit from the gift of pastors who, while being formed through various programs with their own distinctive features, still share a common entry-level competency

for pastoral ministry through the attainment of similar core competencies or formation outcomes.

To sum up, there are three primary ways the growth path concept can be applied to pastoral formation for students in non-MDiv routes to ordination. To this end, the task force recommends the following:

1. That the Synod in convention call upon the seminaries to build upon or design new curricular growth path options to move qualifying certificate students to a nondegree alternate route equivalency (with a degree option for qualifying students). This option should be presented as an ideal and real possibility for certificate students and a funding model must be established to make its implementation possible.
2. That the Synod in convention call upon the seminaries to create a non-degree continuing-education path of alternate route equivalency for non-MDiv students, who for various reasons are not able to complete the alternate route equivalency while at the seminary.
3. That the Synod in convention call upon the seminaries to move all non-MDiv students toward similar core pastoral formation outcomes across all its pastoral formation programs that, depending on the program, are met at various levels of competency.

Conclusion

The recommendations of the task force responding to 2013 Res. 5-14A generally fall into **five categories**:

1. Recommendations to improve all the routes to ordination provided in our Synod, as well as to explain clearly the factors that distinguish between those routes preparing men for general service and those that prepare men for more specific contexts.
2. Recommendations designed to foster greater collaboration and coordination between those entities responsible for the means by which our Synod recruits, trains, and certifies pastors.
3. Particular recommendations the task force believes should be considered to strengthen the SMP programs of the two seminaries.
4. Thoughts for the floor committee to be assigned to work with the recommendations of both the 4-06A Task Force on licensed lay deacons and the 5-14A Task Force on routes to ministry.
5. General recommendations regarding the importance of continuing education, a “growth path,” for all pastors.

We commend them all to the Synod for prayerful and careful deliberation.

Herbert Mueller, *Chairman*

Appendix A—Present Constitution and Bylaws re “Routes to the Pastoral Office

All of our “routes to the pastoral office” are governed under the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod. Following are the pertinent references:

Constitution Articles III and VI

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 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.*
2. *Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as:*
 - a. *Serving congregations of mixed confession, as such, by ministers of the church;*
 - 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. *Regular call of pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, certified lay ministers, and parish assistants and regular election of lay delegates by the congregations, as also the blamelessness of the life of such.*
4. *Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school.*
5. *A congregation shall be received into membership only after the Synod has convinced itself that the constitution of the congregation, which must be submitted for examination, contains nothing contrary to the Scriptures or the Confessions.*
6. *Pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, deaconesses, certified lay ministers, or candidates for these offices not coming from recognized orthodox church bodies must submit to a colloquium before being received.*
7. *Congregations and individuals shall be received into membership at such time and manner, and according to such procedures, as shall be set forth in the bylaws to this Constitution.*

Colloquy—Bylaw 3.10.2

B. Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry

- 3.10.2 *The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry shall be responsible for the reception and processing of applications for individual membership in the Synod through colloquy.*
- 3.10.2.1 *The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry shall consist of the First Vice-President of the Synod as chairman, a district president appointed by the Council of Presidents, and the presidents of the seminaries or their representatives.*

3.10.2.2 *The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry shall establish and monitor academic, theological, and personal standards for admission to the office of the pastoral ministry by colloquy after consultation with the faculties of the seminaries.*

(a) *In consultation with the President of the Synod, it shall develop all necessary policies to govern eligibility and the process to be followed to determine qualifications and suitability for pastoral service in the Synod.*

(b) *Decisions to declare applicants qualified for the pastoral ministry and to certify for placement shall be at the sole discretion of the committee.*

(c) *Every applicant whom the committee declares qualified shall be assigned his first call by the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments.*

Seminary Faculties—Bylaw 3.10.4.7.10

3.10.4.7.10 *Each seminary shall have established policies and procedures related to salary, faculty organization, faculty involvement in establishing education policies, dispute resolution, modified service, sabbaticals and leaves. It shall also have policies and procedures related to student discipline.*

(a) *The salary schedules of all institutional employees shall be fixed by the board of regents on recommendation of the president of the seminary.*

(b) *The board of regents, on recommendation of the president of the seminary, shall establish an effective faculty organizational structure.*

(1) *The president or his designee shall preside at regular and special meetings.*

(2) *The faculty shall elect a secretary and provide for the election of committees, consisting of faculty members or of faculty members and other persons, who shall study, evaluate, and report to the faculty on policy matters affecting the academic activity of the seminary, the activity and welfare of the members of the faculty, and the life and welfare of the students.*

(3) *The faculty shall elect a standing hearings committee or assign the functions of such a committee to another standing committee.*

(c) *Each faculty shall recommend policy to the board of regents through the president for the admission, transfer, dismissal, or withdrawal of students, set the standards of scholarship to be maintained by students, determine criteria for graduation or failure, act on recommendations in the matter of granting certificates, diplomas, and such academic or honorary degrees as may lawfully be conferred by the seminary.*

(d) *Each faculty shall develop and construct curricula implementing the recognized and established purposes of the seminary and designed to attain the objectives of preparation for professional church workers and other Christian leaders approved by the Synod.*

(e) *Each faculty shall pursue the improvement of teaching and learning and the evaluation of their effectiveness in every segment of the seminary and its curriculum.*

(f) *Each faculty shall recommend policy to the board of regents through the president regarding out-of-class life and activity of its students so that the co-curricular and off-campus activities of the students contribute to the attainment of the educational objectives of the seminary. The faculty shall recommend such policies as will be conducive to the cultivation of a Christian deportment on the part of all students, will stimulate the creation of a cultured and academically challenging atmosphere on and about the whole campus, and will make a spiritually wholesome*

community life possible.

(g) *Each faculty shall recommend policy to the board of regents through the president regarding the maintenance of wholesome conditions of faculty service and welfare.*

(h) *The faculty of each seminary, because it prepares professional workers directly for service in the Synod, shall conform its placement policies to the provisions for the distribution of candidates and workers through the Board of Assignments of the Synod.*

(1) *An academic year of supervised internship (vicarage) is required of all seminary students before graduation.*

(2) *Every vicar shall be assigned by the Council of Presidents, acting as the Board of Assignments.*

(i) *Controversies and disagreements among faculty members or other employees (other than those involving matters described in Bylaw 3.10.4.7.5) shall be submitted to the president of the seminary for mediation.*

(1) *If this proves unsuccessful, he shall report the matter to the board of regents for arbitration.*

(2) *After hearing the parties to the matter, the board will render its decision, which shall be final, without the right of appeal under the provisions of the dispute resolution process of the Synod.*

(3) *A record of the proceedings shall be filed with the President of the Synod.*

(j) *Faculty members may request early retirement under the applicable provisions of the Concordia Retirement Plan.*

(1) *Upon retirement, faculty members who are ordained or commissioned ministers of religion are retained on the emeritus roster of the Synod on the basis of Bylaw 2.11.2.1 and may, by action of the board of regents, be retained on the roster of their faculty as “emeriti” (Bylaw 3.10.4.7).*

(2) *Service loads and the conditions of service after retirement shall be determined by the board of regents.*

(k) *Each seminary shall state policies regarding sabbaticals for faculty and leave-of-absence procedures for all employees within guidelines provided by the board of regents.*

(l) *Each board of regents, on recommendation of the president, shall adopt a comprehensive policy statement committing the school to the principles of Christian discipline, evangelical dealing, and good order governing the students individually and collectively.*

(1) *Each student shall be informed regarding the disciplinary policy and procedure and under what conditions and to whom an appeal from a disciplinary decision may be made.*

(2) *There shall be no right of appeal under the provisions of the dispute resolution process of the Synod.*

Placement by the Council of Presidents—Bylaw 3.10.1.3

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.*

Eligibility for Individual Membership—Bylaw 2.7

2.7.1 *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.

- 2.7.2 Candidates who have satisfactorily completed an approved colloquy program of the Synod for the ordained or commissioned ministry must be declared qualified for a first call and be recommended by the appropriate colloquy committee (see Bylaws 3.10.2ff. and 3.10.3ff.) 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.
- 2.7.3 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 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 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.
- 2.7.5 A pastor emeritus from another church body, after having completed an approved colloquy program of the Synod, may be placed on the roster of the Synod without call by action of the Council of Presidents on the basis of policies adopted by the Council of Presidents.

(a) Such placement shall be acknowledged by a rite of recognition in a worship service preferably of the congregation of the Synod where he holds membership.

(b) Such rite is to be authorized by the district president.

Qualification for First Call—Bylaw 2.8.1

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 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).

(b) In addition, they must have indicated complete dedication to the ministry and evidenced a readiness for service in the church.

(c) Finally, to be declared qualified and recommended by the faculties or colloquy committees for their specific types of service in the church, the appropriate faculty or colloquy committee must be satisfied that the individual will meet all personal, professional, and the theological requirements of those who hold the office of ministry to which the individual aspires.

(d) In addition, an academic year of supervised internship (vicarage) is required of all seminary students before graduation, ordinarily in the second year before graduation.⁵⁶

These requirements apply to all whom the Church recruits, trains, and prepares for the pastoral office.

Notes

1. The full report is available at www.lcms.org/convention.
2. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2000 (KW) pp. 46 and 47. Cp. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, Goettingen, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1967 (BKS) p. 69. The Tappert edition reads, for the German, “without a regular call” and, for the Latin, “unless he is regularly called.” See Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 36. The Bente English translation from *The Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), reads “unless he be regularly called.” *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2005), while based on Bente, translates the phrase “a rightly ordered call” (65).
3. AE 39:310.
4. *Church and Office*, Thesis I on the Office, 152.
5. The Greek verb *τίθημι*, used in verse 28, means to establish something or to appoint someone.
6. References are largely from *Church and Office*, 168.
7. Online at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=410>; abbreviated as *Divine Call*.
8. *Ibid.*, 5.
9. *Ibid.*, 10.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, 12. Note well: the rationale is for Lutherans to ordain, not to dispense with ordination, something they insisted they did not want. See Ap XIV and the section that follows.
12. *Ibid.*, 13.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, 14. It should be noted, then, that the term “call” is therefore being used in a twofold manner. In AC XIV, “called” is used to refer to an entire, threefold process of placing a man into the Public Office of the Ministry. The reference to a “right of calling” is a more narrow designation of the specific congregational call to an eligible candidate who is or will be ordained. On this understanding of the term “call” that can apply to both an individual congregation’s decision and also to the call process of the wider church, see also CTCR, *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, Nomenclature* (1981) which says on page 30: “The term ‘call’ should be used for those who have specifically been equipped to perform certain ecclesiastical functions and have made a commitment to dedicate their lives to that service unless or until God directs them to other callings. The term ‘call’ should not be used where such commitment is lacking, and those who serve the church other than under a call should be referred to simply as ‘lay workers.’ Furthermore, in a synodical form of church fellowship and congregational interdependence, those who are ‘called’ must be under the supervision of the whole church.”
15. *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, Nomenclature* (1981), 30. Emphasis added.
16. *LSB Agenda*, Rite of Ordination. 167.
17. Apology XIV 1 in the Book of Concord makes it evident that ordination was an aspect of *rite vocatus*. Every English version refers to “canonical ordination” as something the reformers fully support, even as they condemn the Roman Church for preventing them from maintaining ordination in the usual manner. See K-W, 222–23; also the Theodore G. Tappert translation: “With the proviso that we employ canonical ordination, they [the authors of the Roman Confutation] accept Article XIV, where we say that no one should be allowed to administer the Word and the Sacraments in the church unless he is duly called.” Furthermore, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord* (based on the translation by William Hermann Theodore Dau, Gerhard Friedrich Bente; St. Louis: CPH, 2005) comments on page 212, “Here Melancthon affirms Lutheranism’s desire to maintain whatever best contributes to good order, peace and harmony in the Church. Therefore, Lutherans have insisted on a rightly ordered call and ordination for those who will serve the Church as ministers of Word and Sacrament.”

18. Ibid.
19. *Church and Office*, Thesis VI, 209.
20. See 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9; see also 2 Timothy 2:15.
21. See Augustana XV and Apology XV.
22. It is certainly true that if the wider church does not make it possible to provide pastors, then a congregation has every right to act on its own to appoint a minister from among themselves. Because Rome would not ordain pastors for Reformation churches, this became a central point in the Treatise and in Luther.
23. See an excellent essay by Joel P. Okamoto, “The Office of the Holy Ministry,” in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 70 (2006): 97–111. This paper was presented at two joint meetings of the systematics departments of both LCMS seminaries and represents a consensus of these departments on the subject. It also appeared in *Concordia Journal*, published by the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.
24. “Catholicity” here refers not to the *Roman* Catholic Church, but “catholic” in the sense of the universal Church, found wherever the Gospel is proclaimed and the Sacraments administered. For instance, in the Nicene Creed, where we confess the “one holy Christian and apostolic Church” the original wording is “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church”.
25. Other Scriptures cited regarding ordination include 1 Timothy 4:14: “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you” and 2 Timothy 1:6: “Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” What is the gift imparted by the apostolic custom of the laying on of hands? Is it the Spirit, with gifts for pastoral work? Is it the office itself? Our church has been reticent to say more than the text, but it is clear that something is given. Perhaps the best understanding is that through the whole process of examination, call, and ordination the office of pastor is entrusted to an individual, not to lift him above the people, but to charge him humbly to serve in the stead of Christ. The risen Lord has given “the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers . . .” (*Ephesians 4:11*). The call gives a man the office of pastor. Ordination publicly declares before God and the whole church that the call was legitimate and the man consecrated by the Word of God and prayer for the work of a pastor (cf. 1 Timothy 4:5).
26. Report of the 4-06A Task Force, available at <http://www.lcms.org/emailviewonwebpage.aspx?erid=8646699&trid=9b79cda4-496f-4523-a20c-8342386af65b>
27. The full Bylaw references are included in Appendix A.
28. Even when the Fort Wayne seminary was moved to the St. Louis campus during the Civil War, it maintained this “practical seminary” focus. In 1875, it was moved to Springfield, Illinois, and in 1976 back to Fort Wayne.
29. Policy Manual of the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry—The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2015 edition.
30. 1992 Synod *Handbook*, Bylaw 6.87–6.99.
31. In 2002, the seminary established the Hispanic deaconess program as a comparable alternate route for deaconess certification.
32. Data provided from a presentation by Dr. Kou Searing of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the Synod’s Board for National Mission on Oct. 9, 2015.
33. Ibid.
34. 2007 Res. 5-01B, *2007 Proceedings*, pp. 133ff. SMP replaced the older DELTO program. The task force recognizes that there is some disagreement in the Synod as to the nature and effect of any restrictions this enabling resolution for the SMP program placed on the types of ministry contexts in which specific ministry pastors could be used. The “WHEREASES” of the resolution state: “WHEREAS, The needs for providing pastoral ministry in specific and specialized situations where a traditionally prepared seminary candidate or pastor is not available continue to multiply; and WHEREAS, Our Synod needs to find a way to provide for an increase in pastoral ministry to meet such needs of the church, especially in light of the mission challenges of today’s world; (*2007 Proceedings*, p. 136). A common impression is that SMP is primarily for those places where licensed lay deacons have been serving, e.g., smaller,

rural congregations or other situations where full-time ministry has been difficult or impossible to maintain. Yet the language of the 2007 resolution has also been interpreted to allow congregations to use specific ministry pastors as staff pastors for larger congregations, or also in church planting and/or satellite situations. While not ruling these out, the Synod clarified its intent in 2013, resolving that “district presidents 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 (2013 Res. 5-04B, *2013 Proceedings*, p. 140).

35. DELTO, forerunner to SMP, produced 80 pastors.
36. Core competencies necessary for admission: (1) Entry-level competence in Old and New Testament 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.
37. Since the beginning of the SMP program, there have been two cases, one at each seminary, where a student decided, after ordination, not to finish the 16 courses of the program. In both cases, the student resigned or was removed from the roster of the Synod, as required by 2007 Res. 5-01B.
38. CTSFW, in partnership with Seminario Concordia in Buenos Aires, Argentina, developed a program for forming pastors in the Spanish-speaking world outside of the US entitled *Formación Pastoral para Hispanoamérica* (Pastoral Formation for Hispanic-America). The BPFL curriculum is based on this curriculum, along with English lectures and readings. It is a four-year program that will be part of the SMP program at Fort Wayne.
39. For instance, the Center for Hispanic Studies in St. Louis and its predecessor, the Hispanic Institute of Theology, are the result of resolutions adopted by Synod conventions: 1973 Res. 6-22; 1975 Res. 6-10; 1977 Res. 10-03 & 10-09A; 1979 Res. 6-10A; 1981 Res. 6-08A; and 1983 Res. 6-15B.
40. People of the Book Lutheran Outreach at Fort Wayne and the Cross-Cultural Ministry Center at Irvine are two examples.
41. Note, however, that the Concordia, Fort Wayne, bilingual program for Latinos is now being folded into Fort Wayne’s SMP program.
42. We recognize that efforts are underway to fill this position by mid-2016, God willing.
43. Colloquy efforts are supervised by the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry but shall also be carried out in a manner complementary to degree and certificate routes.
44. The Res. 4-06A Task Force Report, page 21, available at <http://www.lcms.org/emailviewonwebpage.aspx?erid=8646699&trid=9b79cda4-496f-4523-a20c-8342386af65b>
45. *2013 Proceedings*, pp. 139ff.
46. Again, a common understanding is that SMP is limited to “congregations unable to afford a full-time pastor” and to men who do not aspire to full-time ministry. Yet there are also certain situations where a bi-vocational or part-time pastoral assistant might be a very effective way of meeting pastoral ministry needs.
47. In addition to the course work, students take two residential seminars (one week each).
48. This is not to say that commissioned ministers should be fulfilling specifically pastoral responsibilities, but that congregations and districts should not overlook other auxiliary offices in the church (e.g., DCE, DCO, deaconess, etc).
49. Core competencies necessary for admission: (1) Entry-level competence in Old and New Testament 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.
50. It should also be noted, however, that much more is accomplished in the first two years of SMP than eight or nine courses. Students have achieved significant skills in the four ministry areas that meet or exceed what is required

experientially in resident field education and in some basic pastoral skill courses. And they have completed a vicarage, with the same requirements and reports as the residential program.

51. The call is valid, but the individual in the call, by the rubrics of the program, can no longer remain on the roster of the Synod. Therefore he must resign from the roster and from the congregation, since a congregation is not allowed by the Bylaws to be served by a pastor not on the roster of the Synod.

52. Task Force Recommendation 1 (see above) recognizes that specific ministry pastors constitute a category of pastors always under the supervision of a general pastor (*de jure humano*).

53. This does not mean that commissioned ministers would be doing Word and Sacrament pastoral ministry, but serve in positions that support and assist the pastoral office.

54. The task force recognizes this proposed change is controversial. SMP was designed, among other things, to “regularize” those situations where licensed deacons were serving as *de facto* pastors without ordination. Would delaying ordination until the end of the SMP program increase the amount of time or the likelihood that men will be serving as *de facto* pastors without the recognition of the wider church through ordination? The task force believes this should not be the case but that normally the vicarage supervisor/mentor (or another pastor could be found) should preside for the administration of the Sacraments. In most areas of the church, that should be possible. However, in those areas where, due to distance or other insurmountable factors, the district president and congregation could be allowed to ask for the student to be ordained half way through the program.

55. See the specific recommendations of the 4-06A Task Force, especially Recommendation 1 (Colloquy for Licensed Lay Deacons) “... that those licensed lay deacons who are regularly preaching and administering the Sacraments be required to apply for a colloquy to examine their ability to teach and overall fitness for ministry. Upon certification by the Colloquy Committee they will be called by the congregations where they have been serving, ordained into the Office of the Public Ministry, and placed on the roster of specific ministry pastors.”

56. All bylaw references are taken from the *2013 Handbook*.

Routes to the Pastoral Office
(There is one office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament)

Programs That Prepare Men for Particular Ministry Contexts					Preparation for General Placement		
	EIIT/DIT	CHS (at CSL)	SMP (Both Seminaries)	CMC	Alt. Route (Both Seminaries)	MDiv Residential (Both Seminaries)	Colloquy
Telos (Program Goal)	First-generation ethnic pastor for ethnic ministry (service where traditional grad unable or unlikely to function)	General Hispanic pastor (for mission and ministry where Spanish language predominates)	Specific ministry pastor prepared for specific ministry contexts defined by congregations and districts	New, sustainable, urban, cross-cultural church planter following plan and plant developed within program	Forming general pastors	Forming general pastors; breadth and depth of theology for general pastoral ministry	Route to ministry in the LCMS for pastors trained outside of LCMS—also 10-year licensed lay deacons
Year Program Began	Began in 2003–4	Began in 1987 as the Hispanic Institute of Theology under the auspices of CSL on CU Chicago's campus. 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.	Began with the 2008–9 academic year, fall quarter. Previous program was DELTO (Distance Education Leading to Ordination). SMP was authorized by 2007 Synod convention, Res. 5-01B.	Began in 1995	Began with 1996–97 academic year, fall quarter. Previously, this was under the auspices of the colloquy program. Colloquy was listed by the 1992 Synod <i>Handbook</i> under Bylaw 6.87–6.99 as listed in the 1995–96 academic catalog.	1839	1847
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. DIT does the same for deaf communities and cultures. Both offer a program for women in mission and ministry contexts, which leads to commissioning as an LCMS deaconess.	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.	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. Men in the SMP program are ordained more quickly than under DELTO (after 2 years rather than 6), seeking thereby 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, for instance, 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.	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) who start new ministries in non-Anglo or multiethnic contexts	Residential alternate route is the alternate route most closely parallel to the MDiv, but it is for men who are 35 years or older, commissioned ministers, or men with significant experience in parish life.		Historically always part of the LCMS structure and culture

	EIIT/DIT	CHS (at CSL)	SMP (Both Seminaries)	CMC	Alt. Route (Both Seminaries)	MDiv Residential (Both Seminaries)	Colloquy
Specific Needs Not Addressed in Other Programs	EIIT and DIT provide a basic understanding of Lutheran theology and practice within the context of the deaf community or the context of first-generation, non-Anglo cultures, leading to certification as a rostered pastor or deaconess of the LCMS.	Pastoral and deaconess formation for US Hispanics (primarily immigrants) whose first or primary language is Spanish and are serving in US Hispanic missions where Spanish is a major component of these missions	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.	CMC provides a comprehensive theological education leading to general pastoral certification with an emphasis on cross-cultural mission planting, with the goal of a new, sustainable, urban, cross-cultural plant and new mission start developed within the program.	The residential AR provides a comprehensive theological education with extensive grounding in theology and practice, exegetical skills based on Greek language, and ministerial formation leading to certification as a general pastor for those with significant church experience.		We need 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 also are able to bring their congregations into the Synod. In 1998, the Synod also provided that licensed lay deacons involved in Word and Sacrament ministry as de facto pastors are eligible to apply.
Total Number of Pastors Produced	ca. 70	74 since the mid-1990s. Since 2006–7, the average number of pastoral graduates is 7 to 8 per year. 18 deaconesses have finished their program.	CTSW—48 CSL—163	50	CTSW (residential)—127 CSL—85 since 1996		Unknown, but many. On average, approximately 15–20 per year.
Program Completion Rates (Past 5 Years)	Not provided	In the past 10 years, the completion rate for pastoral students admitted is 72%.	CSL retention rate is 85% since the first graduates in 2012, according to CSL. Ca. 90% of CTSFW students who started the program have completed it or are still in the program.	ca. 95%	Past 5 years provided begins with the academic year where all students have completed their program. Those that began 2010 to the present are either still attending classes, on vicarage, or withdrew from the program.		Unknown

	EIIT/DIT	CHS (at CSL)	SMP (Both Seminaries)	CMC	Alt. Route (Both Seminaries)	MDiv Residential (Both Seminaries)	Colloquy
Financial Assistance	CSL academic catalog states that "published tuition for EIIT (and DIT) students will not generally be discounted." It also states that "merit scholarships may be available, but are not guaranteed."	CSL academic catalog states that "published tuition for CHS students will not generally be discounted." It also states that "merit scholarships may be available, but are not guaranteed."	SMP students at CTSFW do not have access to financial aid resources. However, some SMP students may receive assistance from their LCMS district. The Siebert Lutheran Foundation may provide some assistance for students from Wisconsin. The CSL catalog states that "published tuition for SMP students will not generally be discounted." It also states that "merit scholarships may be available, but are not guaranteed."	No scholarships from CSL, but CU, Irvine, may provide a 33% scholarship.	CTSFW—AR residential students receive financial aid resources. Students must complete a FAFSA form to determine need. AR students in 2014–15 could receive anywhere from 0% to 55% tuition grant based on need. CSL—AR residential students receive the same financial assistance as resident MDiv students.		
Placement	Initial	Initial	Initial	Initial	Placement at end	Placement at end	Placement after certification
Call and Ordination	At conclusion	At conclusion	CSL—after 9 courses with commitment to finish CTSFW—after 8 courses with commitment to finish	At conclusion	At conclusion	At conclusion	We do not reordain men ordained in other church bodies, but we install them according to our Lutheran Church orders.
Ministry Context	First-generation immigrant ministry	Spanish-language Hispanic mission and ministry in the US	Open—specific contexts defined by the district and the congregation	New ministries in non-Anglo context (bilingual as needed), within Southwest Region	Generalist, upon final placement	Generalist, upon final placement	Generalist, upon final placement

	EIIT/DIT	CHS (at CSL)	SMP (Both Seminaries)	CMC	Alt. Route (Both Seminaries)	MDiv Residential (Both Seminaries)	Colloquy
Educational Prerequisite	Ability to work at college level	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.	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, Christian witness, and teaching the faith will be demonstrated by portfolio submissions and the recommendation of the district president.	Bachelor's degree with liberal arts criteria—must simultaneously enter CU, Irvine, MA in theology and culture	Ability to work at master's level; 2 years college minimum—ordinarily will possess bachelor's degree, though some do not.	Bachelor's with liberal arts criteria	Master of divinity or 10 years as a licensed lay deacon. Some exceptions may be made.
Age Requirements	Ordinarily not less than 30 years of age. Pastoral students serving in a first-generation culture or non-English-language ministry where no seminary-prepared pastor is available, and where his 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.	Ordinarily not less than 30 years of age. Pastoral students serving in a Spanish-language mission and ministry, and where his presence and ministry are expected during and after the completion of the program.	No age requirement listed in academic catalog. The applicant must be "mature in faith and life."	No age requirement listed in the academic catalog.	Ordinarily at least 35 years of age		No age requirement

Experiential Prerequisite	Language/cultural fit. Must have been actively involved as a communicant member in an LCMS parish for at least 2 years prior to enrollment.	CHS (at CSL) Language and cultural fit. Actively involved as a communicant member in an LCMS parish for at least 2 years prior to enrollment.	SMP (Both Seminaries) 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.”	CMC Language/cultural fit; must be LCMS member for 2 years.	Alt. Route (Both Seminaries) 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 graduates of a synodical college/university, on the synodical roster of commissioned ministers, and have at least 8 years experience as commissioned ministers of the LCMS.	MDiv Residential (Both Seminaries) Basic spiritual formation; sense of commitment to pastoral candidacy	Colloquy Does the man think as a Lutheran pastor? Is he above reproach, etc. (1 Timothy 3)?
Unique Admission Requirements	1. Presence necessary to support ongoing ministry 2. More appropriate than residential program due to language or educational background	1. Presence necessary to support ongoing mission and ministry 2. More appropriate than residential program due to language or educational background and socioeconomics	1. Presence necessary to support ongoing ministry 2. Nomination of district president and placement as vicar	Presence necessary to support ongoing ministry			Qualifications laid out in Scripture
Language & Level	English as a foreign language/American sign language	Spanish, but English is encouraged in the classroom and optional for some class assignments.	English	English competence to work at a master’s theological level. All non-native English speakers are assessed and take English prerequisite classes if needed.	English	English	Mostly English, though we do provide interpreters for those more comfortable in other languages.
Region	Nationwide	Nationwide	Nationwide	Region 5 (West Southwest)	Nationwide	Nationwide	Nationwide
Location	Distance education	Distance education with on-campus residential intensives and extension centers	Distance education with required residential seminars or on-campus intensive courses	Hybrid (min. 8 courses face-to-face; remaining synchronous video conference)	Residential	Residential	NA

	EIIT/DIT	CHS (at CSL)	SMP (Both Seminaries)	CMC	Alt. Route (Both Seminaries)	MDiv Residential (Both Seminaries)	Colloquy
Degree or Certificate	Certificate	Certificate with MA option	Certificate; no degree. However, courses receive full recognition toward AR certificate or MDiv degree at CTSFW and CSL.	Certificate from CSL and CU, Irvine, MA in theology and culture	Certificate or MA	MDiv	Certificate
Continuation Path (besides normal C.Ed.)	None, may pursue MA	None, may pursue MA	AR or MDiv (there is also a nonresidential SMP AR continuation track)	None	MA, MDiv	None	
Biblical Languages	None	None	None—but Greek is required for the SMP AR continuation track	Greek	Greek	Greek/Hebrew	
Curriculum Length	16 courses, 48 quarter hours (concurrent vicarage)	18 courses, 54 quarter hours (concurrent vicarage)	16 courses, 48 quarter hours (concurrent vicarage)	27 courses (11+16) (109.5 quarter hours) 73 seminary hours + 6 Greek + vicarage	90 quarter hours + 12 Greek + vicarage (18)	108 quarter hours + 12 Greek + 12 Hebrew + vicarage (18)	Colloquy is very individualistic, depending on the needs of the man. Various courses may be required.
Program Length	4 years	4 years	4 years	4 years	3 years	4 years	1–2 years
Residential and Contextual Learning	Distance education with on-campus intensives	One-third of course work is face-to-face during short-term on-campus intensives. The other two-thirds delivered through online technology.	Distance learning primarily. Several residential seminars or on-campus intensive courses. Significant learning comes from student's local congregation or ministry setting experiences.	For those near CU, Irvine, 100% residential. For others, 3 weeks (min. 2 courses) per year residential; remaining courses taught by synchronous live-feed video conference.	All education is residential in a classroom setting.	All education is residential in a classroom setting	Seminary courses or SMP courses may be required. Reading under a mentor may be required.
Vicarage	Concurrent vicarage	Concurrent vicarage begins during 2nd year of studies and ends before the 4th year of studies is completed.	Formal vicarage takes place during the first 2 years of the program. The vicarage grade appears on the transcript before ordination. No credit hours granted.	4 years of concurrent vicarage, during which the vicar starts a new ministry under supervision of an ordained pastor.	One year full-time vicarage after all course work has been completed	One year full-time vicarage	A vicarage in an LCMS congregation is often but not always required.
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.	Supervising pastor is selected in consultation with the district president according to established seminary criteria for supervising pastors.	SMP students are assigned a pastor who mentors them while they are completing the program.	Supervising pastor chosen in collaboration with the district, interviewed by the director of CMC and approved by CSL.	No supervising pastor required while students complete course work. Faculty advisors assigned. There is a field work pastor supervising assigned field work in a parish.	No supervising pastor required while students complete course work. Faculty advisors assigned. There is a field work pastor supervising assigned field work in a parish.	Supervising pastor or mentors may be required, depending on the needs of the candidate.

Roster Status	EIIT/DIT	CHS (at CSL)	SMP (Both Seminaries)	CMC	Alt. Route (Both Seminaries)	MDiv Residential (Both Seminaries)	Colloquy
	General	General—usually where Spanish language is needed for US Hispanic mission and ministry.	Specific ministry pastor—always under supervision of a general pastor, even after completing the program.	General	General	General	General
Attrition Rates	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known			
Other			CTSWF is joining in partnership with Concordia—New York and the Atlantic, New Jersey, and New England districts of the LCMS to offer Bilingual Pastoral Formation for Latinos (BPFL), a special track within the SMP program at CTSFW. The typical student will be a Latino selected by one of the districts that are participating in the program and must receive a recommendation from their parish pastor. 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. Graduates of the BPFL will be ordained and placed on the roster of the Synod as specific ministry pastors because this is not a separate program but a track now folded into the SMP effort at Fort Wayne.				

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X. Task Force on Dispute Resolution Report

Introduction

The dispute resolution and suspension/expulsion processes of our Synod, adopted by the 1992 convention and greatly expanded by the 2004 convention, have been a blessing to our Synod countless times. On average, ten or so disputes reach the Dispute Resolution Panel or Hearing Panel level annually, but this is in no way indicative of the use and benefit of the processes. Disputes among us are being resolved on a regular basis with the assistance of our Synod's trained reconcilers and/or the tireless efforts of circuit visitors and district presidents. Only a few are decided by panels. And only a very few end up in civil courtrooms.

Our Synod's dispute resolution processes are said to be the envy of other church bodies. Our key to success is our reliance, also when resolving disputes, on our Lutheran understanding that the "heart and center of all Christian conflict resolution is the justification of the sinner through grace in Christ. Biblical reconciliation of persons in conflict begins with God's truth that we are all sinners who have been reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus" (Synod Bylaw 1.10.1.3).

On occasion in recent years, however, we have experienced isolated difficulties with our processes, particularly the Bylaw section 2.14 process, "Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod." While isolated, these cases have revealed shortcomings in the bylaws governing these processes and a need for critical changes to address certain areas of concern.

This report of the Task Force on Dispute Resolution, appointed by the President of the Synod in April 2015, identifies those areas of concern and addresses them by offering proposals for changes to pertinent Bylaw sections.

It has been an honor to be asked to serve on this task force. We pray that our efforts will serve good purpose and help to continue to improve our Synod's processes for addressing disputes among its members.

Rev. Dr. George Gude (Commission on Constitutional Matters, Commission on Handbook)

Rev. Dr. Raymond Hartwig (Secretary of the Synod)

Rev. Dr. Richard Nuffer (Commission on Handbook)

Judge Neely Owen (Commission on Constitutional Matters)

A. To Further Expedite the Dispute Resolution and Suspension/Expulsion Processes

Rationale

Bylaw 1.10.1 speaks of disputes, disagreements, or offenses as "a grave concern for the whole church" that "should be resolved promptly." An oft-voiced concern regarding the current dispute resolution and suspension/expulsion processes is that they take overly long to complete.

In addition, current time frames vary between the bylaws governing dispute resolution and those governing suspension/expulsion processes, often for identical steps in the processes. The following changes to Bylaw sections 1.10 and 2.14 will conserve time and provide uniformity. The changes to Bylaw section 2.14 are also, upon adoption by the 2016 convention, to be applied to the 2.15, 2.16, and 2.17 processes as shown in the addendum to this report.

Also proposed is an addition to Bylaws 1.10.4 and 2.14.2 to accommodate unforeseen circumstances that at times make strict adherence to time frames impossible, also providing authority to the administrator of the process to grant exceptions and to report intentional noncompliance to the President of the Synod.

Finally, an additional source of potentially lengthy delay has been the difficulty experienced by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations in responding within the time frames established by bylaws to requests for opinions regarding theological issues surfaced by the dispute resolution and expulsion processes. Included in the proposed actions below is a bylaw solution that would authorize the executive committee of the commission to render these opinions within the established time frames.

Proposed Actions

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the following changes be made to Bylaw sections 1.10 and 2.14 to expedite and provide uniformity throughout the Synod dispute resolution and suspension/expulsion processes, it being understood that changes to the Bylaw section 2.14 process will be applied to the Bylaw sections 2.15, 2.16, and 2.17 processes during preparation of the 2016 *Handbook*.

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

1.10 Dispute Resolution of the Synod

- 1.10.5 ... (c) Within 45 days of the conclusion of the consultation and receipt of any advice or opinions as described above, the district president shall....
- 1.10.6.1 The administrator shall promptly within 15 days select the reconciler in the manner hereinafter set forth and then notify the parties....
- 1.10.7 If the parties to a dispute with the assistance of the reconciler have been unable to achieve reconciliation, the complainant shall notify the Secretary of the Synod within 30 15 days after receiving....

2.14 Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod

- 2.14.3 ... (f) Only Within 45 days after all the requirements of the consultation provided in this bylaw (Bylaw 2.14.3) have been followed may the accuser....
- 2.14.5.3 ...the Referral Panel shall carry out these provisions in the process of making its determination within 60 days whether or not to initiate formal proceedings.
- 2.14.6 ...the district president in commencing formal proceedings shall...(c) provide to the member a written notification that the member has 15 days from the date of receipt of the statement of the matter....

- 1.10.7.2 ...Within ~~30~~ 15 days after the appointment of the panel, the hearing facilitator shall confer with the parties to the dispute and the Dispute Resolution Panel for the purpose of choosing a location....
- 1.10.7.3 The formal hearing before the Dispute Resolution Panel, conducted by a hearing facilitator, shall take place within ~~60~~ 45 days after the ~~date of the final~~ selection of the ~~hearing facilitator~~ location and date of the formal hearing, unless there is unanimous consent by the panel members for a short delay beyond such ~~60~~ 45 days for reasons the panel deems appropriate.
- 1.10.7.4 ...~~(b)~~ Within ~~60~~ 30 days after the hearing, the panel shall issue a written decision that shall state the facts determined by the panel...
- 1.10.8 Within ~~30~~ 15 days after receiving the decision of the Dispute Resolution Panel, any party to the dispute or the President of the Synod...may appeal....
- 1.10.8.2 Within ~~30~~ 21 days after receipt, an Appeal Panel shall be selected in the prescribed manner, and the Secretary of the Synod shall send the appeal....
- 1.10.8.3 Within 30 days after its formation, the Appeal Panel shall issue its written decision in response to the request for reconsideration.
- 1.10.8.4 If an appeal is granted, the Secretary of the Synod, or his representative, shall, within 21 days, select a Review Panel....

And be it further

Resolved, That, because unforeseen circumstances can make adherence to time allowances in the above processes impossible at

- 1.10.4 ...~~(p)~~ **Shall:** Retains its compulsory meaning in this bylaw section. Its use, however, in connection with time frame expectations may require exceptions at times due to insurmountable circumstances, to be granted by the administrator of the process.

~~(pg)~~ ...

And be it further

Resolved, That, to provide incentive for adhering to the time frames embedded in these bylaws, the following new definition paragraphs be added to Bylaws 1.10.4 and 2.14.2:

- 1.10.4 ...~~(r)~~ **Time Frame:** Period of time allowed for carrying out a bylaw requirement, to be monitored by the administrator of the process, incidents of purposeful non-compliance to be reported to the President of the Synod.

And be it finally

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.5.3.2 be amended and a new Bylaw 3.9.5.2.3 be added to authorize the executive committee of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to function on behalf of the commission and respond to dispute resolution and suspension/expulsion process requests for opinions:

1.5.3.2 All mission boards, commissions, and governing boards may make use of executive committees to act in times of emergency between plenary meetings, ~~and~~ to act on delegated assignments, ~~and~~ to act as specified elsewhere in these Bylaws.

3.9.5.2.3 The executive committee of the commission shall, within 30 days, provide opinions on theological matters in response to questions presented by ecclesiastical supervisors or panels as described in the dispute resolution and suspension/expulsion processes of the Synod (Bylaw sections 1.10 and 2.14–2.17). Because these opinions are in response to a specific situation, they shall carry no precedential authority beyond that particular matter.

- 2.14.7.6 Within 15 days after the Hearing Panel is constituted, the hearing facilitator shall, after conferring with the panel, the accused, and the district president who imposed the suspended status, select a date....

- 2.14.7.6 ...and location within 45 days after the Hearing Panel was constituted for the panel to hear and consider the matter, unless there is unanimous consent by the panel members for a short delay beyond such 45 days for reasons the panel deems appropriate.

- 2.14.7.9 Upon completion of the hearing, the Hearing Panel shall deliberate and then issue its written decision within 30 days.

- 2.14.8 The decision of the Hearing Panel may be appealed by the accused...within 15 days after receiving the decision....

- 2.14.8 ...~~(a)~~ Within ~~30~~ 21 days after receipt of an appeal from the accused or the President of the Synod, an Appeal Panel shall be selected....

- 2.14.8 ...~~(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....

- 2.14.9 Within ~~30~~ 21 days after the receipt of the decision of the Appeal Panel..., a Final Hearing Panel shall be selected.

times, the following paragraphs in the definitions bylaws governing the dispute resolution and suspension/expulsion processes be added to allow exceptions when necessary:

- 2.14.2 ...~~(s)~~ **Shall:** Retains its compulsory meaning in this bylaw section. Its use, however, in connection with time frame expectations may require exceptions at times due to insurmountable circumstances, to be granted by the administrator of the process.

~~(st)~~ ...

- 2.14.2 ...~~(w)~~ **Time Frame:** Period of time allowed for carrying out a bylaw requirement, to be monitored by the administrator of the process, incidents of purposeful non-compliance to be reported to the President of the Synod.

B. To Further Articulate Ecclesiastical Supervision of District Presidents by the President of the Synod

Rationale

That the preservation of pure doctrine and unity of practice was uppermost in the minds of the founders of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was evident in their introductory paragraphs to the earliest version of the Synod's Constitution: "Here in the United States of North America, without common churchly association, the [sic] all of the individual Lutheran congregation [sic] would hardly preserve the pure doctrine and withstand in the long run the pressure of false believing fickle spirits and enthusiasts and it would be impossible for them, on the basis of this same faith and through cooperation

of the same love to pursue their purposes for the advancement of the church....”

Along with this determined interest in pure doctrine and unity of practice came the recognition that an office of ecclesiastical supervision for this newly organized Synod would be required to lead it in focusing its attention on this primary interest. The office of president was established to provide such supervision, his visitation/supervision duties intended to make certain that the doctrine and practice of pastors and congregations were in conformity with the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. The next following convention (1849) added a new paragraph to the Synod’s Constitution further articulating the President’s responsibilities:

If in between conventions public offense is given by individual pastors of the Synod, whether voting or advisory members—in respect to doctrine or life, and [if] after admonition by the President and other officers this is not confessed with a repentant heart and no improvement is pledged, then the President is empowered temporarily to suspend the membership of such pastors until the next session of the Synod and is also to make such suspension public. The President is empowered in urgent emergencies to announce previously [prior to the temporary suspension] that a particular member is under investigation. (1849 *Proceedings*, p. 10)

When the Synod divided itself into districts in 1854, maintaining the theological unity of the Synod continued to be a major concern. The President continued to be responsible for such unity through his visitation, but this was becoming an impossible task as the Synod grew in size. Proper visitation was therefore a primary reason for the Synod to be divided into districts, for the purpose of “(1) watching over the purity and unity of doctrine within the Synod; (2) supervision over the performance of the official duties on the part of pastors and teachers of the Synod; (3) common defense and extension of the church; and (4) giving theological opinions and judgments; also settling disputes between individuals or whole parties in congregations, but the latter only in cases in which all interested parties have applied to Synod [for arbitration], etc.” (see C. S. Meyer, ed., *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964], p. 151).

However, while the 1854 constitution continued to place the supervision of the doctrine and practice of the officers, pastors and teachers, individual districts, pastoral conferences, and congregations of the entire Synod in the hands of the President, it also made district presidents the President’s agents in carrying out this supervision, including the authority to temporarily suspend a member. This provision remained largely unchanged until a major revision of the structure of the Constitution in 1920, when the duties of the President of the Synod were articulated in the same form and manner as they are today in Article XI B of the Constitution of the Synod:

B. Duties of the President

1. The President has the supervision regarding the doctrine and administration of
 - a. All officers of the Synod;
 - b. All such as are employed by the Synod;
 - c. The individual districts of the Synod;
 - d. All district presidents.
2. It is the President’s duty to see to it that all the aforementioned act in accordance with the Synod’s Constitution, to admonish all who in any way depart from it, and, if such admonition is not heeded, to report such cases to the Synod.
3. The President 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 in all the districts of the Synod....

Bylaws 3.3.1–3.3.1.3 speak further regarding those powers and duties of the President of the Synod articulated in Constitution Art. XI. Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 speaks specifically of his ecclesiastical supervisory powers and duties in relation to the officers and agencies of the Synod, in particular “the individual districts of the Synod, and all district presidents.” During the past two trienniums, dispute cases have raised questions that beg further articulation of this relationship. The task force proposes the following changes to Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 to provide such additional articulation.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 be amended to provide further clarification of the ecclesiastical supervisory responsibilities of the President of the Synod as district presidents carry out the President’s ecclesiastical supervisory duties:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

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.

- (a) He shall see to it that the resolutions of the Synod are carried out. After the national convention has determined triennial emphases for the Synod, he shall, in consultation with the Council of Presidents, identify specific goals for the national office that will support and encourage ministry at the congregational level.
- (b) In the districts of the Synod, he shall carry out his ecclesiastical duties through the district’s president, who is responsible to the President of the Synod for the manner in which he carries out his ecclesiastical supervision.
- (c) He shall at regular intervals officially visit or cause to be visited all the educational institutions of the Synod to exercise supervision over the doctrine taught and practiced in those institutions.
- (d) He shall meet regularly with the Council of Presidents and, as deemed necessary, with individual district presidents or small groups of district presidents to see to it that they are in accordance with Article II of the Constitution, adopted doctrinal statements of the Synod, and doctrinal resolutions of the Synod as they carry out their ecclesiastical supervision. He shall receive regular reports on this subject from the district presidents. In cases of doctrinal dissent, Bylaw section 1.8 shall be followed.

C. To Further Articulate and Incorporate the Ecclesiastical Supervisory Role of the President of Synod in the Dispute Resolution and Suspension/Expulsion Processes

Rationale

While the 1854 constitution, which created districts, continued to place the supervision of the doctrine and practice of the officers, pastors and teachers, individual districts, pastoral conferences, and congregations of the entire Synod into the hands of the President, it also made district presidents his agents in carrying out this supervision in the districts, including the authority to temporarily suspend a member. This provision remained largely unchanged until a major revision of the structure of the Constitution in 1920, when the duties of the President of the Synod were articulated in the same form and manner as they are in Article XI B of the current Constitution of the Synod:

B. Duties of the President

1. The President has the supervision regarding the doctrine and administration of
 - a. All officers of the Synod;
 - b. All such as are employed by the Synod;
 - c. The individual districts of the Synod;
 - d. All district presidents.
2. It is the President's duty to see to it that all the aforementioned act in accordance with the Synod's Constitution, to admonish all who in any way depart from it, and, if such admonition is not heeded, to report such cases to the Synod.
3. The President 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 in all the districts of the Synod.... (emphasis added)

Among those "means at his command" are the dispute resolution and expulsion processes of the Synod, where issues of doctrine and practice are often under consideration. Sufficient opportunity must be provided in these processes for the President of the Synod to carry out his "power to advise, admonish, and reprove." While some such opportunity already exists in these processes, in such times as the present when other nominal Lutherans "have recently declared openly their falling away from the Lutheran, that is the churchly doctrine of the sacrament, and to whom the confession of the church seems to be something changeable and ambiguous, as if it does not rest on the unchangeable and eternal word of God, not to speak of the fact that the confessions should permeate the entire practice of the church in an ordering and enlivening way" (Introduction to the 1847 version of the Constitution of the Synod), it is a constitutional expectation that the President of the Synod be provided ample opportunity to carry out his ecclesiastical supervisory responsibilities, especially at such times when issues of doctrine and practice are being decided.

Proposed Actions

Therefore be it

Resolved, That a new Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 be added to include under the President's ecclesiastical powers and duties the responsibility for reviewing panel decisions in the Synod's dispute resolution and expulsion processes, to read as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING***Powers and Duties—Ecclesiastical***

3.3.1.1 As chief ecclesiastical officer of the Synod, the President shall supervise the doctrine taught and practiced in the Synod, including all synodwide corporate entities.

3.3.1.1.1 As the chief ecclesiastical officer of the Synod, the President shall review all panel decisions associated with the dispute resolution and suspension/expulsion processes of the Synod that pertain to doctrine taught and practiced.

3.3.1.1.2 The President of the Synod has ecclesiastical supervision...

And be it further

Resolved, That a new subparagraph (4) be added to paragraph (d) of Bylaw 1.10.8.2 to provide an additional standard of review for an Appeal Panel's consideration as it reviews a Dispute Resolution Panel's decisions, to read as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING***Reconsideration of a Dispute Resolution Panel Decision***

...

1.10.8.2 (d) The standards of review, which define the parameters for the panel's consideration of an appeal, limit the panel's review to ~~three~~ four basic areas:

- (1) Factual findings: The Appeal Panel shall review factual findings of the Dispute Resolution Panel only to determine if they are supported by evidence. The Appeal Panel shall not ordinarily sit in judgment of the Dispute Resolution Panel's conclusions regarding evidence, since that panel was in the best position to judge factual issues. The Appeal Panel must be convinced that a mistake has been committed, that is, that the evidence is such that reasonable minds could not disagree.
- (2) Conclusions on authority: The Appeal Panel may approve an appeal if the Dispute Resolution Panel was clearly outside its authority, e.g., a decision that the panel had no authority to make under the Constitution and Bylaws, or a decision on an issue not identified by the Dispute Resolution Panel, or a decision on a theological question that the panel had no authority to make.
- (3) Discretionary acts: The Appeal Panel may approve an appeal if there was a clear abuse of discretion impacting the decision of the Dispute Resolution Panel, resulting in a gross miscarriage of justice, or that involves an obvious and inappropriate bias or prejudice.
- (4) Theological content: The Appeal Panel may approve an appeal if it believes that the Dispute Resolution Panel's decision was not in compliance with the doctrine and practice of the Synod as articulated in its Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions. The Appeal Panel may also approve an appeal if the Dispute Resolution Panel's decision was not in compliance with opinions of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations and/or the Commission on Constitutional Matters requested by the Dispute Resolution Panel or the President of the Synod.

And be it further

Resolved, That a new subparagraph (4) be added to paragraph (d) of Bylaw 2.14.8 to provide an additional standard of review for the Appeal Panel's consideration as it reviews a Hearing Panel's decisions, to read as follows:

Appeal Panel

...

2.14.8 (d) The standards of review that shall define the Appeal Panel's considerations shall be limited to ~~three~~ four basic areas:

- (1) Factual findings: The Appeal Panel shall review factual findings of the Hearing Panel only to determine if they are supported by evidence. The Appeal Panel shall not ordinarily sit in judgment of the Hearing Panel's conclusions regarding evidence, since the Hearing Panel was in the best position to judge factual issues. The Appeal Panel must be convinced that a mistake has been committed, that is, that the evidence is such that reasonable minds could not agree with the Hearing Panel's decision.
- (2) Conclusions on authority: The Appeal Panel may approve an appeal if the Hearing Panel was clearly outside its authority, e.g., a decision was made that the panel had no authority to make under the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod, or a decision was made on an issue not related to the sole issue to be decided, or a decision was made on a theological question that the panel had no authority to make.
- (3) Discretionary acts: The Appeal Panel may approve an appeal if there was a clear abuse of discretion impacting the decision of the Hearing Panel, resulting in a gross miscarriage of justice, or that involves an obvious and inappropriate bias or prejudice.
- (4) Theological content: The Appeal Panel may approve an appeal if it believes that the Dispute Resolution Panel's decision was not in compliance with the doctrine and practice of the Synod as articulated in its Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions. The Appeal Panel may also approve an appeal if the Dispute Resolution Panel's decision was not in compliance with opinions of the Commission on Theology and Church

Relations and/or the Commission on Constitutional Matters requested by the Dispute Resolution Panel or the President of the Synod.

And be it further

Resolved, That a new Bylaw 1.10.8.5 be added to the Bylaw 1.10 dispute resolution process that will provide for a final theological review of Review Panel decisions prior to their release, to be conducted by the President of the Synod as chief ecclesiastical officer charged with the responsibility for supervision of the doctrine taught and practiced in the Synod not specifically delegated to others by the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod, as follows:

Final Decision of Review Panel

1.10.8.5 The final decision of the Review Panel shall be submitted to the President of the Synod as chief ecclesiastical officer for a final theological review. The President shall bring matters of theological concern to the panel for further attention prior to release of the panel's decision.

1.10.8.6 The final decision of the Review Panel shall

- (a) be binding upon the parties to the matter and not be subject to further appeal;
- (b) have no precedential value;
- (c) be carried out by the district president or the President of the Synod; and
- (d) be publicized as deemed appropriate under the circumstances by the district president or the President of the Synod.

And be it finally

Resolved, That a new Bylaw 2.14.9.1 be added to the Bylaw 2.14 suspension/expulsion process that will provide for a final theological review of Final Hearing Panel decisions prior to their release, to be conducted by the President of the Synod as chief ecclesiastical officer charged with the responsibility for supervision of the doctrine taught and practiced in the Synod not specifically delegated to others by the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod, as follows:

Decision of Final Hearing Panel

2.14.9.1 Upon completion of the hearing by the Final Hearing Panel, the panel shall deliberate and then submit its decision to the President of the Synod as chief ecclesiastical officer for a final theological review. The President shall bring any matters of theological concern to the panel for further attention prior to release of the panel's decision.

2.14.9.2 After the final theological review by the President of the Synod, the Final Hearing Panel shall issue its written decision within 30 days, a copy of which shall be mailed to the accused, the district president that imposed the suspension, the accuser and his district president, the Secretary of the Synod, and the President of the Synod. The final decision of the Final Hearing Panel shall

- (a) be binding upon the parties to the matter and not be subject to further appeal;
- (b) have no precedential value;
- (c) be carried out by the district president or the President of the Synod; and
- (d) be publicized as deemed appropriate under the circumstances by the district president or the President of the Synod.

D. To Replace Referral Panels by Restoring the Right of Accusers to Appeal District President Decisions to the President of Synod

Rationale

Membership in the Synod is and always has been a privilege that is either granted or terminated by the Synod. In the earliest period of its history, the Synod retained the authority to make decisions regarding membership to itself, to be made by its conventions. Over time, the Synod adopted bylaw processes for making such decisions. In the matter of expulsions from the Synod, such processes were to be fair and impartial.

Initially, the President of the Synod as ecclesiastical supervisor assumed the authority to suspend members prior to their expulsion. Not long after, district presidents as the President's agents were given the authority to suspend, with final decisions regarding expulsion to be made by a convention of the Synod or district. In time, Synod bylaw changes provided opportunity for appeals of suspensions to commissions and boards of the Synod or districts prior to expulsion.

The 1992 convention of the Synod, which created the Synod's dispute resolution process, retained district presidents' authority to suspend but delegated the authority for final decisions regarding expulsion from membership to dispute resolution panels. When the 2004 convention created new processes solely for suspension and expulsion, panels of three district presidents were given responsibility for expulsion decisions. The 2010 convention replaced one of the three presidents on such panels with a lay reconciler.

Of particular note as the removal from membership process evolved over nearly 170 years was the decision by the 1965 convention to empower the President of the Synod to act when a district president failed to act on an accusation brought against a member of the Synod. This presidential authorization to act was then given to the Praesidium of the Synod in 1989 and retained as part of the overhaul of the suspension/expulsion processes in 1992.

The 2004 convention's major overhaul of the process removed the right of an accuser to appeal to the Praesidium of the Synod when the district president declined to act. In its place, the accuser could now request that the matter be presented to a Referral Panel of three circuit visitors if the district president fails or refuses to act, this panel then making the decision regarding the suspension, thereby reducing the opportunity for a full and objective hearing and placing an ecclesiastical supervisory decision in the hands of circuit visitors which constitutionally only belongs to district presidents.

The history of the suspension/expulsion process supports a return to past practice which existed from 1965 to 2004, leaving the responsibility for suspension in the hands of those charged with ecclesiastical supervision. When a district president fails or declines to act, this will allow an appeal by the accuser to the President of the Synod, who in consultation with the Praesidium of the Synod, will decide when an accusation warrants suspension and, if requested by the accused, a hearing before a panel.

Proposed Actions

Therefore be it

Resolved, That changes be made to Bylaw section 2.14 (and incorporated as appropriate into Bylaw sections 2.15 and 2.17) to remove all reference to a Referral Panel and restore to the suspension/expulsion process an opportunity for an accuser, when a district president fails or declines to act on an accusation, to appeal to the President of the Synod:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.14 Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod

Preamble

2.14.1 Termination of membership in the Synod is a serious matter involving both the doctrine and life of those to whom it has been granted....

...

- (b) The action to commence expulsion of a congregation or individual from membership in the Synod is the sole responsibility of the district president who has the responsibility for the ecclesiastical supervision of such member, or by the President of the Synod under Bylaw 2.14.5.2.

...

Definition of Terms

2.14.2 The definitions of terms used in this bylaw are as follows:

...

- (g) ~~Fails to act:~~ No measures initiated within the required period of time to ascertain the truth or falsity of the accusations, or the stifling of a complaint by the refusal to act:

...

- (s) ~~Referral Panel:~~ A panel that may be formed of three circuit visitors or district presidents, who shall be selected according to these bylaws to determine, according to the facts learned from the investigation, whether or not to proceed:

...

Referral Panel

2.14.5 In the determination whether or not to initiate formal proceedings, the district president may form a Referral Panel consisting of three circuit visitors of the district:

- (a) If three circuit visitors from the district are not available to serve by reason of conflict of interest or otherwise, the district president may select a sufficient number from other districts to form the panel:
- (b) This panel shall be formed by blind draw and shall not include the circuit visitor of the accused or the accuser. The blind draw shall be administered by the district president and audited by witnesses:

2.14.5.1 After reviewing the accusation and the results of the investigation, the Referral Panel shall make the determination whether or not to initiate formal proceedings:

2.14.5.2 Whether made by the district president or the Referral Panel, if If the determination of the district president is not to initiate formal proceedings, the district president he shall in writing so inform the accuser, any other district president involved, and the involved member, which shall terminate the matter, unless the accuser presents the written complaint or accusation to the President of the Synod as provided below (Bylaw 2.14.4.3).

2.14.5.3 If the district president fails to act within 60 days after receipt of the formal written complaint or accusation, the accuser may present a formal written request to the district president for the forming of a Referral Panel, which request the district president must grant. If the provisions of Bylaw 2.14.4 have not been carried out, the Referral Panel shall carry out these provisions in the process of making its determination whether or not to initiate formal proceedings: If the district president fails or declines to suspend the member within 90 days after receipt of the written complaint or accusation, the accuser may present the written complaint or accusation to the President of the Synod. If, after investigation and consultation with the Praesidium of the Synod, the President determines that the facts are such that it could lead to expulsion

of the member under Article XIII of the Constitution, the President of the Synod shall designate one of the vice-presidents of the Synod to proceed in the same fashion as is hereafter required of the district president. If the President of the Synod determines not to proceed, he shall in writing so inform the complainant and the involved member, which shall terminate the matter.

Commencing Formal Proceedings

2.14.6~~5~~ If the district president ~~or the Referral Panel~~ concludes that the facts form a basis for expulsion of the member under Article XIII of the Constitution, the district president in commencing formal proceedings shall...

(Note: the following are related changes unique to Bylaw section 2.15 "Expulsion of a District President or Officer from Membership in the Synod.")

Referral Panel

2.15.5 In the determination of whether or not to initiate formal proceedings, the President of the Synod may form a Referral Panel consisting of three district presidents:

- (a) This panel shall be formed by blind draw, shall not include the district president that is a party to the matter or the district president or an accused officer or the district president of the accuser:

- (b) The blind draw shall be administered by the chairman of the Council of Presidents audited by witnesses:

2.15.5.1 After reviewing the accusation and the results of the investigation, the Referral Panel shall make the determination whether or not to initiate formal proceedings:

2.15.5.2 Whether made by the President of the Synod or the Referral Panel, if If the determination of the President of the Synod is not to initiate formal proceedings, ~~he~~ the President of the Synod shall in writing so inform the accuser, any other district president involved, and the accused officer of the Synod or district president involved member, which shall terminate the matter, unless the accuser presents the written complaint or accusation to the chairman of the Council of Presidents as provided below (Bylaw 2.15.4.3).

2.15.5.3 If the President of the Synod fails or declines to suspend the officer of the Synod or district president within 90 days after receipt of the written complaint or accusation, to act within 60 days after receipt of the formal written complaint or accusation, the accuser may present a formal written request to the President of the Synod for the forming of a Referral Panel, which request the President of the Synod must grant. If the provisions set forth in Bylaw 2.15.4 have not been carried out, the Referral Panel shall carry out these provisions in the process of making the determination whether or not to initiate formal proceedings: the accuser may present the written complaint or accusation to the chairman of the Council of Presidents or next qualified officer of the Council of Presidents. If, after investigation and consultation with other district presidents as he sees fit, the chairman of the Council of Presidents determines that the facts are such as could lead to the expulsion of the member under Article XIII of the Constitution, the chairman of the Council of Presidents shall proceed in the same fashion as is hereafter required of the President of the Synod. If the chairman of the Council of Presidents determines not to proceed, he shall in writing so inform the complainant and the involved member, which shall terminate the matter.

Commencing Formal Proceedings

2.15.6 If the President of the Synod ~~or the Referral Panel~~ concludes that the facts form a basis for expulsion of the member under Article XIII of the Constitution, the President of the Synod in commencing formal proceedings shall...

(Note: the following are related changes unique to Bylaw section 2.17 "Expulsion of Individuals from Membership in the Synod as a Result of Sexual Misconduct or Criminal Behavior.")

Referral Panel

2.17.5 In the determination whether or not to initiate formal proceedings, the district president may form a Referral Panel consisting of three circuit visitors of the district:

- (a) If three circuit visitors from the district are not available to serve by reasons of conflict of interest or otherwise, the district president may select a sufficient number from other districts in order to form the panel.
- (b) This panel shall be formed by blind draw and shall not include the circuit visitor of the accused or the accuser. The blind draw shall be administered by the district president audited by witnesses.

2.17.5.1 In the event that the accused is a district president, an officer of the Synod, or the President of the Synod, the Referral Panel shall consist of three district presidents selected by a blind draw administered by the chairman of the Council of Presidents and audited by witnesses. Such panel, which shall exclude any involved district president, shall function as set forth hereafter:

2.17.5.2 After reviewing the accusation and the results of the investigation, the Referral Panel shall make the determination whether or not to initiate formal proceedings:

2.17.45.23 Whether made by the district president or the Referral Panel, if the determination of the district president or the President of the Synod is 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, unless the accuser presents the written complaint or accusation to the President of the Synod or Chairman of the Council of Presidents as provided below (Bylaw 2.17.4.3).

2.17.45.34 If the district president (or the President of the Synod in the case of a district president or officer of the Synod) fails to act or declines to suspend the member within 6090 days after receipt of the formal written complaint or accusation, the accuser may present the a formal written request complaint or accusation to the President of the Synod (or in the case of a district president or officer of the Synod to chairman of the Council of Presidents), to the district president for the forming of the Referral Panel, which request the district president must grant. If the provisions of Bylaw 2.17.4 have not been carried out, the Referral Panel shall carry out these provisions in the process of making its determination whether or not to initiate formal proceedings.

- (a) In the case of an individual member, if, after investigation and consultation with the Praesidium of the Synod, the President of the Synod determines that the facts are such that it could lead to expulsion of the member under Article XIII of the Constitution, the President of the Synod shall designate one of the vice-presidents of the Synod to proceed in the same fashion as is hereafter required of the district president. If the President of the Synod determines not to proceed, he shall in writing so inform the complainant and the involved member, which shall terminate the matter.
- (b) In the case of a district president or officer of the Synod, if, after investigation and consultation with other members of the Council of Presidents, if deemed necessary, Praesidium of the Synod, the Chairman of the Council of Presidents determines that the facts are such that it could lead to expulsion of the member under Article XIII of the Constitution, he shall proceed in the same fashion as is hereafter required of the district president. If the Chairman of the Council of Presidents determines not to proceed, he shall in writing so inform the complainant and the involved member, which shall terminate the matter.

Commencing Formal Proceedings

2.17.56 If the appropriate district president or the President of the Synod or the chairman of the Council of Presidents ~~or the Referral Panel~~, whichever the case may be, concludes that the facts form a basis for

expulsion of the member under Article XIII of the Constitution, the appropriate ecclesiastical supervisor in commencing formal proceedings shall....

E. To Reformulate the Composition of Hearing and Final Hearing Panels

Rationale

While the 1854 Constitution of the Synod continued to place the supervision of the doctrine and practice of the officers, pastors and teachers, individual districts, pastoral conferences, and congregations of the entire Synod into the hands of the President of the Synod, it also made the district presidents his agents in carrying out this ecclesiastical supervision within their districts, including the authority for temporary suspension of members of the Synod. This provision remained largely unchanged until a major revision of the structure of the Constitution took place in 1920, whereupon the duties of the President of the Synod were articulated in the same form and manner as they are articulated in Article XI B of the current Constitution of the Synod.

For many years after 1854, suspensions of rostered church workers were resolved by the next district convention, which made the decision whether or not to expel the member, such decisions appealable to a convention of the Synod. After Synod conventions struggled with the problem of properly dealing with such appeals due to “increasingly vexing problems of procedure” (1935 *Proceedings*, p. 211), the 1944 convention adopted a precise procedure to be followed for these appeals, calling for a Board of Appeals for each district and for the Synod and a convention Committee of Review to determine if boards of appeals had made procedural errors. The 1965 convention later eliminated all appeals to conventions, whereupon appeals from a district Board of Appeals (after 1971, called commissions on adjudication) were now directed to the Synod Board of Appeals.

In the 1980s, the Synod attempted in numerous ways to clarify procedures that it felt would be most useful in resolving conflicts at various levels within the Synod, the system of adjudication and appeals proving to be extremely costly in terms of money and time. By 1990, the President of the Synod had appointed a task force to study the matter of conflict resolution and to make appropriate recommendations. The end result was the adoption by the 1992 convention of Res. 5-01B “To Adopt New Process for Conflict Resolution” (1992 *Proceedings*, pp. 141ff), essentially the process still in use today, altered by 2004 Res. 8-01A “To Amend Bylaws on Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution” (2004 *Proceedings*, pp. 165ff).

With reconciliation the primary purpose of all of the processes, “reconcilers” appointed by district boards of directors play a key role—“people ‘of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom’ (Acts 6:3)” (quote from Bylaw 1.10.10.1). They also serve as members of panels to decide disputed matters still remaining after reconciliation efforts have not been successful in resolving disputes. Most recently, 2010 Res. 7-04A “To Approve Changes to the Process of Bylaws 2.14, 2.15, and 2.17” placed a single lay reconciler (along with two district presidents) on Hearing and Final Hearing Panels for deciding whether suspensions by district presidents are to be upheld.

In Part 2 of his 2013 report to the convention, the President of the Synod recommended that the convention consider a resolution to address a shortcoming in the Bylaw 2.14, 2.15, and 2.17 expulsion processes, i.e., “a need to provide doctrinal training or a doctrinal track for reconcilers.” He further suggested: “Perhaps an appeal

involving a doctrinal issue should be heard by a panel of district presidents. Consider how the Synod can ensure that those hearing a doctrinal issue are well versed in the doctrine of the Synod” (2013 *Today's Business*, p. 27). 2013 Res. 7-18 “To Study Doctrinal Training for Reconcilers” was adopted in response to this recommendation for doctrinal training for reconcilers, referring the matter to the Council of Presidents, the Commission on Constitutional Matters, and the Secretary of the Synod “for appropriate study and recommendations.”

The following proposed bylaw changes approach the matter differently, in recognition of the historic understanding that while the authority to suspend has been given to district presidents as part of their ecclesiastical supervisory responsibilities, the power to remove/expel from membership belongs to the Synod. As noted in the brief history provided in the above paragraphs, for a time the Synod delegated this power to district conventions, their decisions appealable to the Synod or, later, to various boards and commissions established by the Synod. Of late, the Synod has delegated this power to its Bylaw section 2.14–2.17 expulsion processes, with opportunity to appeal within the process itself.

Given the extremely important matters that are decided by these panels (removals from membership in the Synod), the task force advocates that their composition be reconsidered. Because these panels most often hear and decide matters of doctrine and practice, efforts should be made to obtain the service of the most knowledgeable persons in those areas for panel service. And because these panels must make objective decisions after hearing testimony and evaluating evidence, efforts should be made to obtain the service of those with aptitude, training, and/or experience in such areas.

Proposed Actions

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw Section 2.14 be amended to alter the composition of Hearing Panels and Final Hearing Panels by identifying and obtaining panel service of persons (a) most knowledgeable in the areas of doctrine and practice and (b) most experienced in making objective decisions after hearing testimony and evaluating evidence. Each district board of directors is to provide the name of one person for each category, their names to be submitted to the Secretary of the Synod to obtain biographical and consent-to-serve information. These two lists of names are then to be reduced by the Council of Presidents to 20 names on each list, from which the President of the Synod in consultation with the Praesidium appoints 12 persons from each list to comprise the pool of 24 arbitrators. From this pool of names are chosen by blind draw the three members of the Hearing Panels and Final Hearing Panels required by the Bylaw 2.14, 2.15, and 2.17 processes as needed; and be it further

Resolved, That the following changes be adopted for Bylaws 2.14.2; 2.14.7.2; and 2.14.9, to be applied also to the 2.15, 2.16, and 2.17 processes as appropriate:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Definition of Terms

2.14.2 The definitions of terms used in this Bylaw section 2.14 are as follows:

...

- (c) ***Arbitrator***: A Hearing Panel or Final Hearing Panel member (1) knowledgeable in the areas of confessional Lutheran doctrine and practice and/or (2) experienced in making objective decisions after hearing testimony and evaluating evidence. Such arbitrators are selected by blind draw by the Secretary of the Synod from a pool of names created

as follows: (i) Each district board of directors shall provide the name of one person who is knowledgeable in the area of confessional Lutheran doctrine and practice and the name of one person who is experienced in making objective decisions after hearing testimony and evaluating evidence; which names shall be (ii) submitted to the Secretary of the Synod to obtain biographical and consent-to-serve information, (iii) the resulting two lists of names to be presented to and reduced by the Council of Presidents to two lists of 20 names, from which (iv) the President of the Synod in consultation with the Praesidium then appoints 12 persons from each list to comprise the pool of 24 arbitrators, from which are chosen by blind draw the three members of a Hearing Panel or a Final Hearing Panel. Arbitrators serve terms of six years, subject to reappointment.

- (ed) ***Blind Draw***: Selection from a pool of eligible names, using a method that will accomplish a truly “blind” draw, to be carried out in the presence of at least two office staff or other neutral persons. A statement attesting to the proper conduct of the blind draw shall be prepared, signed by two witnesses, dated, and included in the record of the case. Names shall be used in the order in which they were surfaced by the blind draw.

...

- (hj) ***Final Hearing Panel***: Three arbitrators, at least one of whom shall be knowledgeable in the areas of doctrine and practice, and at least one of whom shall be experienced in making objective decisions after hearing testimony and evaluating evidence. Two district presidents and a lay reconciler, assisted by a hearing facilitator; who, when the decision of the Hearing Panel is has been successfully appealed, are selected by blind draw by the Secretary of the Synod according to these bylaws to give a final hearing.

...

- (jl) ***Hearing Facilitator***: One selected by blind draw by the Secretary of the Synod as described in Bylaw 1.10.13.2), trained to serve as a facilitator for hearings before panels, who conducts hearings, and advises panels on the form but not the substance of decisions. Hearing facilitators are selected from a pool of 25 trained reconcilers who have exhibited skills in the proper conduct of a fair and impartial hearing, who comprise the Synod’s roster of reconcilers (Bylaw 1.10.12). Hearing facilitators serve terms of service of six years, renewable without limit.

- (km) ***Hearing Panel***: Three arbitrators, at least one of whom shall be knowledgeable in the areas of doctrine and practice, and at least one of whom shall be experienced in making objective decisions after hearing testimony and evaluating evidence, who, when a matter is to be heard and resolved, Two district presidents and a lay reconciler, assisted by a hearing facilitator shall be selected by blind draw by the Secretary of the Synod according to these bylaws to hear the matter and render a final decision unless successfully appealed.

...

Hearing Panel

...

2.14.7.2 A Hearing Panel consisting of three arbitrators, two district presidents (excluding the involved district presidents) and one reconciler who is a layperson, and one reconciler who is a layperson, at least one of whom shall be knowledgeable in the areas of doctrine and practice, and at least one of whom shall be experienced in making objective decisions after hearing testimony and evaluating evidence, shall provide conduct the requested hearing*.

- (a) One district president shall be selected by the accused.
 (b) One district president shall be selected by the district president who imposed the suspended status (a district president may not choose himself).

- (c) One reconciler who is a lay person shall be chosen by blind draw from the Synod's roster of reconcilers, with the blind draw administered by the Secretary of the Synod and audited by witnesses.
- (da) Each Hearing Panel shall be assisted by a nonvoting hearing facilitator who shall administrate and conduct the hearing and may call upon persons and resources that he/she deems necessary for conducting a hearing in a fair and equitable manner.
- (eb) No two members of the panel nor the hearing facilitator shall be from the same district.
- (fc) The hearing facilitator shall administrate the hearing and may draw upon persons and resources that he/she deems necessary for conducting a hearing in a fair and equitable manner.

2.14.7.3 Upon receipt of a request for a hearing, the Secretary of the Synod shall select the three members of the panel and the hearing facilitator and shall notify the suspended member, the district president who imposed the suspension, and the hearing facilitator and panel members of their selection. promptly notify the accused and the district president who imposed the suspended status of their respective right to choose one Hearing Panel member and direct that the identity of their selection be transmitted to the Secretary of the Synod within 15 days from the date of such notice. If either party declines to make a selection within 15 days, the Secretary of the Synod shall then make such selection within five days.

2.14.7.4 The Secretary of the Synod shall also promptly select a lay reconciler to serve as a third member of the Hearing Panel and a hearing facilitator to assist the panel.

2.14.7.5 When the Hearing Panel members and hearing facilitator have so been chosen, they shall promptly be notified of their selection:

...

2.14.7.6 The following guidelines are applicable to the Hearing Panel and all involved persons:

...(h) The suspended member or the district president who imposed the suspension Any party and/or parties to a dispute shall have the right to request disqualification of a panel member or hearing facilitator. The standard for disqualification shall be actual partiality or the appearance thereof. If the panel member or hearing facilitator that individual does not agree to the disqualification, the decision shall be made by a separate three-member panel of district presidents not involved in the case, selected as follows....

...

Final Hearing Panel

2.14.9 Within 30 days after the receipt of the decision of the Appeal Panel granting the request for reconsideration of the decision of the Hearing Panel, a Final Hearing Panel shall be selected.

- (a) The panel shall be constituted in the same prescribed manner as described in Bylaws 2.14.7.2–2.14.7.63, except that the three arbitrators who served on the Hearing Panel and the two district presidents, the reconciler, hearing facilitator that provided assistance to the Hearing Panel, and the involved district presidents are omitted from consideration for the Final Hearing Panel.
- (b) The procedures for the final hearing shall be the same as prescribed in Bylaws 2.14.7.6–2.14.7.8.
- (c) The chairman of the Hearing Panel shall provide the Final Hearing Panel with a written statement of the matter and the Hearing Panel's report decision, minutes, records, and proceedings.

F. To Address Eighth Commandment Concerns via Dispute Resolution and Suspension/Expulsion Processes

Rationale

Martin Luther addresses the meaning of the Eighth Commandment very directly and clearly when he says “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.” This injunction is most important in our time, when the Internet, emails, blogs, texting, Twitter, fast self-collating copy machines, faxes, and otherwise helpful tools provide easy, readily available means for Eighth Commandment sin.

The church lives in this environment of Eighth Commandment sin, repentance, and reconciliation as she carries out all of her work—even as she resolves disputes among members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Because dispute resolution processes can be emotionally charged, and because members of the Synod are sinners as well as saints, hurtful things are said and done. Whether by way of written or verbal statement, or by photo, video, or other man-made image, communication reaches the point where people and reputations are harmed and they suffer decreased respect and/or injury to their reputation and good name, clearly sinful defamation has occurred. Defamation has absolutely no place among Christian people, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, or its dispute resolution process. Even if statements might be true, if they do not build up God's church and speak positively about others, they are sinful.

When defamation arises among parties in dispute resolution, it begs admonition by ecclesiastical supervisors, and if such admonition is futile, disciplinary action provided by the Synod's Bylaws. The responsibility of ecclesiastical supervisors to undertake required action in cases of defamation is of paramount importance.

To bring the matter of defamation in the dispute resolution process to the attention of the Synod, and to attempt to prevent it in the future, the Bylaws of the Synod must address it where appropriate. Hopefully these proposed bylaw amendments will suggest a higher road for walking together in times of dispute and conflict. These changes are as follows:

Proposed Actions

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the following amendments to the Bylaw sections 1.10 dispute resolution and 2.14 expulsion processes be adopted, the latter also to be applied to the section 2.15–2.17 processes as applicable.

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

1.10 Dispute Resolution of the Synod

Preamble

...

1.10.1.4 Christian conflict resolution seeks to resolve dispute 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 and treat one another as redeemed children of God, not defaming but defending and speaking well of one another, seeking to explain and defend everything in the kindest way.

Definition of Terms as Used in This Bylaw Section 1.10

1.10.4 In order to communicate effectively and avoid misunderstanding regarding their use in this dispute resolution process, it is critical that terms be fully defined:

...

(e) **Defame:** Telling lies about, betraying, or slandering another person, or harming that person's reputation, thereby causing decreased respect, loss of confidence in, and/or injuring his/her good name.

...

Informal Efforts toward Reconciliation; Consultation

...

1.10.5 Before any matter is submitted to the formal reconciliation process, the parties involved in a dispute must meet together, face-to-face, in a good-faith attempt to settle their dispute in the manner described in Matthew 18:15 and may involve the informal use of a reconciler....In regard to this consultation:

...

(e) The reputation of all parties to a dispute is to be protected as commanded in the Eighth Commandment. Failure to do so shall be regarded as a violation of the Synod's standard for ethical conduct that may be subject to this same dispute resolution process, a removal from office process, or an expulsion process of the Synod (Bylaw section 1.10, Bylaws 1.5.7–1.5.8; Bylaw sections 2.14–2.16). The goal throughout is always one of reconciliation, of repentance and forgiveness, even if the following proceedings are carried out.

Rules of Procedures

...

1.10.18.1 The following rules of procedure shall be followed:

...

(i) Any member participating in this bylaw procedure or any other person knowledgeable of the procedure and those involved in it who intentionally and materially violates any of the requirements in this bylaw or is persistent in false accusations is subject to the disciplinary measures as set forth in the appropriate Bylaw sections 2.14–2.17 or Bylaws 1.5.7–1.5.8. Any member of the Synod who has personal factual knowledge of the violation shall inform the appropriate district president as the ecclesiastical supervisor. Violations of the prohibitions against defamation of another person's character or reputation, or engaging in publicity while a matter is still undecided or while an appeal is contemplated or pending (Bylaw 1.10.18.1 [d] above) by any person involved or knowledgeable of the procedure are specifically included as a violation subject to the same disciplinary measures set forth in the Bylaws.

2.14 Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod

Preamble

2.14.1 Termination of membership in the Synod is a serious matter involving both the doctrine and life of those to whom it has been granted. Such action should only be taken as a final step when it is clear that those who are being terminated after previous futile admonition have acted contrary to the confession laid down in Constitution Art. II or the conditions of membership laid down in Constitution Art. VI or have persisted in offensive conduct (Constitution Art. XIII 1), including defamation of another person's character or reputation....

...

Definition of Terms

2.14.2 The definitions of terms used in this bylaw are as follows:

...

(d) **Defame:** Telling lies about, betraying, or slandering another person, or harming that person's reputation, thereby causing decreased respect, loss of confidence in, and/or injuring his/her good name.

...

Consultation

2.14.3 When a member congregation or individual member of the Synod is aware of information which could lead to the expulsion of a member from the Synod under Article XIII of the Constitution, prior to any formal written complaint or accusation, the member shall consult with his/her respective district president....

...

(c) If Bylaw section 2.14 applies, the district president shall ensure that the accuser has met face-to-face with the accused in the manner described in Matthew 18:15. Even if the alleged violation of Article XIII of the Constitution is considered to be "public," this provision of Matthew 18:15 shall be followed. The reputation of all parties is to be protected as commanded in the Eighth Commandment. Failure to do so shall be subject to the Bylaw section 1.10 dispute resolution process, or the expulsion processes of the Synod (Bylaw sections 2.14–2.16).

...

General Regulations

...

2.14.10.2 Any member participating in this bylaw procedure that violates any of the requirements or procedures in this bylaw or is persistent in false accusations is subject to the same disciplinary measures as set forth in this bylaw. Violations of the prohibitions against defamation of another person's character or reputation, or engaging in publicity while a matter is still undecided or while an appeal is contemplated or pending (Bylaw 2.14.7.8 [g]) by any of the persons involved or knowledgeable of the procedure are specifically included as violations subject to the same disciplinary measures set forth in this bylaw.

G. To Clarify Definition of and Limits to Right of Brotherly Dissent

Rationale

"The Lutheran Church has always affirmed the right and responsibility of expressing dissent from teachings and practices believed to be at odds with God's Word" (Commission on Theology and Church Relations on p. 6 of its 2006 report, "CTCR Response to Expressions of Dissent [2004–2006]"). Accordingly, the Synod has established an agreed-upon procedure for dissent which respects both the dissenter and the Synod.

When, then, a member of the Synod in such forums as "blogs, Facebook pages, and email pages publicly teaches and advocates that a doctrinal position of the Synod as stated in a resolution of the Synod is in error and does not use the Synod's dissent procedures, he/she/it may no longer be honoring and upholding the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod and could thereby be subject to a charge of false doctrine" (CCM Opinion 13-2665).

Given the development and expanded use of such electronic media by members of the Synod, often to call into question matters of doctrine and practice, at times attempting to excuse such conduct as conversation "within the fellowship of peers" (Bylaw 1.8.2), the Synod will do well to expand its bylaw section on dissent with the

following changes developed upon consideration of the opinion by the Commission on Constitutional Matters in its August 2013 meeting (Opinion 13-2665).

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, that Bylaw section 1.8 “Dissent” be expanded to address current concerns by adding additional wording:

PROPOSED WORDING

1.8 Dissent

1.8.1 While retaining the right of brotherly dissent, members of the Synod are expected as part of the life together within the fellowship of the Synod to honor and uphold the resolutions of the Synod.

1.8.2 Dissent from the doctrinal position of the Synod as expressed in its resolutions and doctrinal statements is to be expressed first within the fellowship of peers (that is, with those who are competent to evaluate the issue critically) and then brought to the attention of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations before finding expression as an overture to the Synod in convention calling for revision or rescission. The discussion among the fellowship of peers is to be conducted privately and confidentially among those who are competent rather than a public forum. While the conscience of the dissenter shall be respected, the consciences of others, as well as the collective will of the Synod, shall also be respected.

1.8.3 This right of brotherly dissent does not allow a member of the Synod publicly to teach contrary to the established position of the Synod. Any such public teaching shall place in jeopardy membership in the Synod.

H. To Add Bylaw Provisions re Ethical Conduct

Rationale

When the Synod had the benefit of a public relations department, it articulated the importance of Christian ethics. One of its stated objectives was to encourage “a clear and faithful witness to the Christian ethic in the marketplace of business, finance, and labor as well as in the halls of government” (1966 *Handbook*, p. 203). Attorneys who work with legal matters are subject to ethical standards requiring them to avoid the appearance of impropriety as they carry out their responsibilities or suffer certain disciplinary consequences. Such a standard for behavior is certainly appropriate for those who have responsibilities in the church, as already articulated in Bylaw 1.5.1.3.

Adding requirements regarding standards for ethical conduct to existing conflict of interest and disciplinary bylaws is appropriate to underscore its importance.

Proposed Actions

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.5.2 be amended as follows to underscore the importance of ethical conduct:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest and Ethical Conduct

1.5.2 Every board or commission member, officer, and all staff of corporate Synod and every agency of the Synod shall avoid conflicts of interest and shall conduct themselves in an ethical manner as described in this bylaw.

(a) ~~Every agency~~ All agencies shall implement the synodwide

conflict of interest policies, conflict-of-interest policy, and that policy which shall be applicable to them ~~those agencies~~ and all staff operating under them. ~~This policy~~ Conflict of interest policies shall include the following provisions:

- (1) Every board or commission member shall disclose to the chairman of the agency and all staff shall disclose to the chief executive or executive director of the agency any potential conflicts of interest. Each chairman or chief executive or executive director shall disclose personal potential conflicts of interest to the appropriate board or commission.
- (2) Such disclosures shall include board membership on, a substantial interest in, or employment of the individual or a relative by any organization doing business with corporate Synod or any of the agencies of the Synod.
- (3) Every board or commission member, officer, and all staff of corporate Synod and every agency of the Synod who receives honoraria or payments for any sales or services rendered to corporate Synod or any of the agencies of the Synod shall disclose such information.
- (4) All such disclosures shall be reported to the respective board or commission to determine by a vote of its remaining impartial members whether an inappropriate interest exists, and such vote shall be recorded in its official minutes. In the case of officers, all such disclosures shall be reported to the President of the Synod to determine whether an inappropriate interest exists.
- (b) All agencies and corporate Synod shall implement ethical conduct policies, which shall be applicable to those agencies and all staff operating under them. Ethical conduct policy shall include provisions addressing the following:
 - (1) In general, Responsibilities shall be carried out in a manner reflecting the highest degree of integrity and honesty consistent with the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod, the policies of corporate Synod and the agencies of the Synod, and civil laws.
 - (2) All who become involved in the work of the church, especially those who are called into positions of oversight and supervision, are expected to conduct themselves according to the highest standards, to be above reproach avoiding even the appearance of impropriety (1 Thess. 5:22 and 1 Tim. 3:2), and thus avoid involvement in actions or activities which would call into question their capacity to perform or deem their actions or behavior unethical within the measure of these standards.
 - (3) Activities shall not be entered into which may be detrimental to the interests of the Synod. Any inappropriate activity shall cease or the position will be vacated.
 - (4) Information acquired in the course of carrying out duties of the Synod shall not knowingly be used in any way that would be detrimental to the welfare of the Synod.
 - (5) No one shall vote on any transaction in which the individual might receive a direct or indirect financial gain.
 - (6) The Board of Directors shall establish policy regarding the acceptance of gifts, entertainment, or favors from any individual or outside concern which does or is seeking to do business with corporate Synod or the agencies of the Synod.
- (c) Individuals, prior to accepting elected, appointed, or staff positions, shall initially and annually thereafter sign statements stating that they have received, understand, and agree to abide by this bylaw reflecting the Synod’s conflict of interest and ethical conduct policy.

Raymond L. Hartwig, *Chairman*

FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

1. National Witness

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R1.4, R6, R14, R54, R59

OVERTURES

1-01

To Reaffirm LCMS Commitment to Work of Great Commission

WHEREAS, The words of Matthew 28:19–20 powerfully share Jesus' Great Commission to His disciples, 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 behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"; and

WHEREAS, That Great Commission has been and remains the heart of our mission as the church, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with those around us; and

WHEREAS, There are many people in our towns, villages, and cities, be they large urban centers or suburban or rural neighborhoods, who have not heard the life-changing Good News of God's kingdom in Christ Jesus; and

WHEREAS, We live during a time of great cultural change, which often impedes the proclamation and reception of God's Word in life and witness; and

WHEREAS, God's mission for the church is to proclaim the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ through Word and Sacrament proclamation in the context of a community of believers, the church; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS reaffirm its commitment to the Great Commission as stated in Matthew 28:19–20; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS reaffirm North America as a mission field with the rest of the world; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS commit its focus, energy, and appropriate resources to train and equip our people under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, that they would be confident to share the Good News of Christ Jesus in creative and bold ways in their neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and wherever they are placed as they live their lives as witnesses for Christ.

Board of Directors, Southeastern District; Florida-Georgia District

1-02

To Support Sharing the Gospel through Professionally Produced Musical Stage Play

WHEREAS, The mission of God's Church is to "go and make disciples of all peoples" (Matt. 28:19), to "go into all the world and preach the Good News" (Mark 16:15), to be the witness of Jesus "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord gave to us a good example for fulfilling that mission through the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 9:22: "I have become all things to men, so that by all possible means I might save some"; and

WHEREAS, Some of the more effective means of outreach lately have utilized public avenues and arenas of communication, and have involved popular activities such as television, movie, and theatrical productions (e.g., *The Bible* TV series and follow-up *Son of God*

movie, the *War Room* and *Woodlawn* movies, and all the Bible-based sight-and-sound plays in Branson, Missouri, and elsewhere); and

WHEREAS, A musical stage play/dramatically portrayed concert has been written by one of our Missouri Synod pastors entitled *Seed of the Woman* (based upon the very first Gospel promise in Genesis 3:15, involving a portrayal of Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil, as well as a portrayal of ten of His female ancestors), through which the Gospel would be proclaimed in such a public and popular manner; and

WHEREAS, A business plan has been formulated for an eight-weekend, community-venue performance tour of *Seed of the Woman*, involving eight theaters/auditoriums in Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah (in the region of the Missouri Synod's Rocky Mountain District, but also easily accessible to eight adjoining states, representing nine other LCMS districts), with the potential for directly reaching up to 10,000 people through the performances, as well as hundreds of thousands through the Gospel-oriented publicity; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Eric Cunningham, executive producer-director-composer of the world-renowned professional singing-dancing-orchestral group Women of Ireland, is supportive of *Seed of the Woman* and has agreed to produce and direct it as well as to provide for all of its singer-dancer-musician needs, according to the above-mentioned business plan and once funding can be assured; and

WHEREAS, Presuming that the regional performance-tour outreach is successful, such could open the door for synodwide, national tour productions of other Gospel-proclaiming musical stage plays by the same Missouri Synod pastor, and possibly involve continued participation by Women of Ireland as well, with the potential for directly reaching hundreds of thousands of people through the performances, as well as millions through the Gospel-oriented publicity; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention approve support of the Colorado-New Mexico-Utah regional musical stage play outreach described above, even looking upon it as a continuing application and fulfillment of the theme "It's Still All about Jesus," and that this eight-weekend, community-venue *Seed of the Woman* performance tour will be planned for July–August 2018; and be it further

Resolved, That besides a budget need of around \$60,000 (as estimated by a representative of the Synod offices of Finance and Communications staff for fund-raising, accounting, publicity, etc.), the donated funding for the total possible production expenses of about \$375,000 (as estimated by Women of Ireland [wages: \$153,000; accommodations: \$41,000; transportation: \$21,000; catering: \$21,000; and scenery: \$11,000], as well as by representatives of area performance venues [\$71,000] and regional radio/television companies [\$57,000]), along with general support (through local publicity, performance attendance, etc.), will be requested from all the Synod and district offices and staff, as well as from all their congregations, schools, organizations, church workers, and other congregational members, along with their various communities; and be it further

Resolved, That e-mail fund-raising correspondence (involving five separate monthly mailings, including things like a letter, poster, news release, and a few reminders) from the Synod's Communications Department (including mention of the connection to the theme "It's Still All about Jesus," as well as the involvement of the Women of Ireland and the possibility that this may lead to potential future nationwide performance tours) will be sent to all Synod-level offices, organizations, and workers; to all the district offices and, through them, to all their staff members, schools, organizations, church workers, and churches, and through them, to all their members and

communities. Such correspondence would also be posted on the Synod and all district websites and published in their various available periodicals. All of that would begin no later than August 1, 2016, and continue through December, with the goal of having all production funding raised by the end of that same year; and be it further

Resolved, That all donated production funds collected by the Synod office (which would be tax deductible) will be deposited as a separate line item in an existing Missouri Synod account and administered by the Synod office's financial staff; and be it further

Resolved, That the performances will be produced, directed, and casted by Mr. Eric Cunningham and Women of Ireland, with consultation by the play's author, Pastor Rick Miller; and be it further

Resolved, That if support for the play tour is approved and the production fund-raising fulfilled, the sponsorship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will be noted on all publicity materials (e.g., on posters, news releases, and ads, which would also be generated by the Synod's Communications Department and sent out through the same kind of e-correspondence, websites, and periodicals as mentioned above) along with its logo and the "It's Still All about Jesus" theme, as well as the involvement of the Women of Ireland; and be it further

Resolved, That if the funds were to fall short of being able to properly produce this regional musical stage play outreach (as determined by Mr. Eric Cunningham and Pastor Rick Miller, in consultation with the regional media and venue representatives), then they would instead be used as part of the Synod's Domestic Grant Program (something which would also be clearly mentioned in the fund-raising communications); and be it finally

Resolved, That if the play tour does end up taking place, a follow-up overture will be considered at the 2019 LCMS convention, including information about the results of the 2018 outreach event, regarding the possibility of a future synodwide, national tour production of another of Pastor Rick Miller's Gospel-proclaiming musical stage plays.

Trinity
La Junta, CO

1-03

To Provide Pastoral Care for Smaller, Financially Struggling Congregations

WHEREAS, Many smaller congregations with inadequate financial resources struggle to afford pastoral care; and

WHEREAS, These congregations need and desire pastoral care and leadership; and

WHEREAS, Word and Sacrament ministry needs to be provided for these congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Texas District consider and develop new ways and/or programs to provide pastoral care for smaller, financially struggling congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod consider and develop new ways and/or programs to provide pastoral care for smaller, financially struggling congregations; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to consider and develop new ways and/or programs to provide pastoral care for smaller, financially struggling congregations.

Texas District

1-04

To Encourage Multi-Congregation Parishes

WHEREAS, God's Word calls us to "keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3); and

WHEREAS, Our sister congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod confess and live out a shared commitment to the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions as a correct exposition of that Word; and

WHEREAS, Congregations have experienced or are experiencing decline in membership and vitality because of changing demographics in their membership and communities (rural and urban); and

WHEREAS, These same congregations may be facing extreme financial stress and therefore are not able to provide for the leadership of a full-time pastor on their own; and

WHEREAS, The availability of semiretired or dual-vocation pastors significantly trails the need, or such pastors are not geographically flexible to meet the needs of these struggling congregations; and

WHEREAS, Many of these congregations are in remote settings that do not allow for a multi-congregation parish to be served weekly by a called, ordained pastor; and

WHEREAS, The training and licensing of lay deacons has addressed the needs of some of these congregations, with the oversight by supervising pastors, circuit visitors, and district presidents; and

WHEREAS, Such arrangements for Word and Sacrament ministry have caused concern among our fellowship in regard to the "*rite vocatus*" of AC XIV; and

WHEREAS, It is essential that we provide the very best in Word and Sacrament ministry possible for God's people by upholding AC XIV; and

WHEREAS, It is also God's call upon His Church to diligently seek to "make disciples as we go [and wherever we go], by teaching and baptizing" (Matt. 28:19); therefore be it

Resolved, That congregations that are unable to financially support a full-time pastor to provide Word and Sacrament ministry intentionally seek to enter into a multi-parish relationship with another geographically close congregation of the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That vibrant and healthy congregations of the LCMS intentionally seek to encourage and assist struggling sister congregations in their geographic vicinity through shared programs, services, and pastoral leadership, leading to a stronger mission together; and be it finally

Resolved, That the resident district president identify and intentionally initiate collegial conversations throughout his district, and coordinate such efforts through the circuit visitors.

Board of Directors
Michigan District

1-05

To Encourage Synod to Develop Plan to Support Sustainability of Congregations

WHEREAS, A growing number of churches have difficulty in sustaining themselves; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod be encouraged to develop a plan including a ministry viability evaluation format specifically aimed at the sustainment and support of these churches; and be it further

Resolved, That this plan should consider such concepts as

- partnering small and large churches;

- encouraging the continuation of current alternate routes of theological education; and
- networking multiple congregations to share resources (e.g., programs and personnel).

Southern District

1-06

To Develop and Identify Resources for Outreach to Muslim Neighbors

WHEREAS, The religion of Islam continues to gain adherents throughout the United States and world; and

WHEREAS, The Lord Jesus has commissioned His Church to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19) through the proclamation of the Gospel; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to adopt as a priority the development and identification of resources (e.g., written and visual materials, convocations, expert human resources within our Synod, and other such resources) which will assist districts and congregations boldly and faithfully to reach out to Muslims with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

English District
Farmington, MI

1-07

To Encourage Ethnic Ministry Outreach

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture tells us, “God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4); and

WHEREAS, According to a recent study by the Center for Immigration Studies, the immigrant population of the State of Missouri is 136,000 persons; and

WHEREAS, Refugees, immigrants, and people from many cultures are in our schools and in our neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Many congregations need special assistance to reach out to people in the changing communities around their churches; therefore be it

Resolved, That congregations be encouraged to witness to others, including other ethnic groups; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations be encouraged to make such outreach a high priority in all activities; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations serving ethnic or changing communities be encouraged to assimilate new members from these groups into leadership positions to foster ownership in the congregation; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations be encouraged to seek partnerships with other congregations and utilize community resources which lend support to Word and Sacrament ministry and Synod resources; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Missouri District memorialize the LCMS in convention to facilitate networking of congregations, agencies, and RSOs of the Synod in fostering improved ethnic ministry opportunities.

Missouri District

1-08

To Assist Fellow Congregations in Utilizing Practices of Excellence for Ministry

WHEREAS, The Synod is composed of approximately 6,000 congregations and numerous organizations, all with unique settings, gifts, talents, and experiences; and

WHEREAS, Each congregation and entity of the Synod desires, through God’s leading, the grace and power to disciple followers of Christ and share His love in the most effective way possible; and

WHEREAS, Each of these congregations and entities has, over time and with the blessing of our heavenly Father, developed practices of excellence in various areas of witness, mercy, and life together; and

WHEREAS, Sharing of these “practices of excellence” within the Synod among congregations and entities is difficult; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod, within the next triennium, undertake the creation of a “Practices of Excellence” electronic database and inform the congregations of the Synod of its existence, which will then allow congregations and entities within the Synod to efficiently participate in an exchange of information; and be it further

Resolved, That this information consist of practices of excellence which individual congregations and other entities have shown to accomplish the sharing of God’s Gospel and His love in a powerful way; and be it further

Resolved, That the Practices of Excellence database also contain demographic, geographic, and other information which will allow congregations and other entities to determine appropriate application of these practices within the context into which our Lord has placed them; and be it finally

Resolved, That through the exchange of these practices of excellence, our congregations and other entities will, by God’s grace, power, and will, become more effective in the glorious task of reaching into this world with the love, grace, and glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Michigan District

1-09

To Focus Emphasis and Resources on Vitality of Congregations

WHEREAS, God instituted congregations; and

WHEREAS, God entrusted the Keys of the Kingdom to congregations; and

WHEREAS, The Synod as an organization is of human origin; and

WHEREAS, An undue concentration on the bureaucracy and work of the Synod can dilute the efforts of local congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That both district and Synod leadership focus their emphasis and resources on the health and vitality of local congregations by identifying and promoting programs or ministries that grow out of congregations.

Michigan District

1-10

To Encourage Church Planting throughout the Synod

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod averaged one new church plant every week for its first hundred years; and

WHEREAS, The starting of new churches has been a foundational method of Kingdom expansion for the LCMS throughout its history; and

WHEREAS, Starting new churches continues to be an effective way to reach new people with the Gospel; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Texas District memorialize the LCMS to encourage church planting throughout the Synod.

Texas District

1-11

To Encourage Mission Starts in Local Neighborhoods

WHEREAS, We live during a time where our secular culture is increasingly hostile to the church in its institutional form, yet yearns for the concept of “community” which is increasingly being satisfied by other groups and organizations; and

WHEREAS, The Book of Acts describes the church of its day as preaching and sharing God’s Word “in the temple and from house to house” (Acts 5:42; 20:20); and

WHEREAS, God’s Word gives witness to His disciples sharing the Gospel in word and deed as they gathered in the temple and in house communities; and

WHEREAS, God blessed the hearing of His Word, as the Scriptures give witness to many people trusting in His Word and believing in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God; and

WHEREAS, There are great opportunities for the church to expand its presence through the local church body as God’s people share their life in Christ through word and deed in their own local neighborhoods and in their homes “outside the walls” of the church building; and

WHEREAS, In the history of the Lutheran expression, there has been a variety of responsible ways under the supervision of the pastor in which congregational Word and Sacrament ministry has been administered that continue among LCMS altar and pulpit fellowship churches; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention encourage our local churches to establish new mission starts to provide a gathering place and community where the Gospel can be shared, proclaimed, and lived; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS affirm that there are a variety of ways in which congregational Word and Sacrament ministry might be accomplished in new contexts such as home churches, missional groups, and other venues; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS through its districts and educational institutions support and encourage the work of the church in reaching out to local neighborhoods to provide hope, community, and life in Christ Jesus.

Board of Directors, Southeastern District; Board of Directors, Florida-Georgia District

1-12

To Adopt Synodwide North American Evangelism Effort

WHEREAS, Our Synod’s constitution states that one of the Synod’s objectives is to “strengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world” (Art. III 2); and

WHEREAS, The Constitution further states that a further objective is to “aid congregations by providing a variety of resources and opportunities for recognizing, promoting, expressing, conserving, and defending their confessional unity in the true faith” [Art. III 6]; and

WHEREAS, One of the reasons for our Synod’s existence given by our Synod’s Articles of Incorporation is “to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ by means of radio and television broadcasting” (Art. II e); and

WHEREAS, According to those same Articles of Incorporation, our Synod is formed “to provide assistance and resources to the congregations, schools, Sunday schools, preaching stations, and agencies of the Synod for the dissemination of the Christian Gospel” (Art. II f); and

WHEREAS, It would be desirable for a synodwide effort to reach out to people in North America with a sound Law/Gospel presentation; and

WHEREAS, Having heard the Gospel, some contact between those hearing the message and a congregation in their area is desirable so that they could hear more about the Savior; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod is only as strong as its congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That we memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to authorize synodwide offerings for the purpose of creating material to be presented over the broadcast, cable, and Internet communication media existing in North America; and be it further

Resolved, That the funds gathered be used exclusively and solely for developing material for broadcast on television channels and/or cable at the seminaries of our Synod, securing broadcast time on television channels and/or cable, and developing and fabricating material for Synod and congregational use on their respective websites and via electronic media as part of this effort; and be it further

Resolved, That this gathering of funds and carrying out of the above resolutions be under the direction of the Board for National Mission; and be it finally

Resolved, That the attached memorandum be conveyed to the Board for National Mission for their consideration in constructing the manner in which this effort will be conducted.

English District
Farmington, MI

Memorandum about Synodwide Evangelism Effort in North America

1. Have two or more Law/Gospel Evangelism presentations made for broadcast on television:
 - A. 15 minutes at max
 - B. Advertise Synod’s website in presentation
 - C. Have available other material for further presentation placed on Synod’s website
2. Leave 5 to 10 minutes for local congregation’s Law/Gospel presentation:
 - A. Presentation ties in with theme of point 1 above
 - B. Presentation advertises local congregation
 - C. Advertise congregation’s website in presentation
 - D. Have available other material for further presentation on congregation’s website
3. Explore possibility of local radio broadcast by local congregation
 - A. Devotion
 - B. Bible study
 - (1) Topic—based on Scripture lesson (e.g., parable)
 - (2) Topic—proof texts in context (e.g., marriage)
4. Make DVDs based on (1) and (2) above
 - A. Include extra material

- (1) Topic—based on Scripture lesson (e.g., parable)
- (2) Topic—proof text in context (e.g., marriage)
- B. Include extra material based on local congregation as ending message on DVD
 - (1) History
 - (2) Worship service
 - (3) Directions to church, times of worship, Sunday School
 - (4) Other information about day school, pastor, community service, etc.
 - (5) Local congregation is responsible for local material
- C. Distribute DVDs to visitors at local congregations
- 5. Run as a pilot program in several districts of the Synod:
 - A. Run as pilot first and solicit comments before expanding
 - B. Expand to more districts if results are positive
 - C. Consider continuing if results are positive, as an evangelism effort of the Synod
 - D. Develop criteria for evaluating

1-13

To Encourage Mission Culture in the Church

WHEREAS, The Lord calls out and sets apart His people to be the Church (*ekklesia*) in the midst of the world and releases them to live out their baptismal lives every day through their various vocations; and

WHEREAS, Scripture gives witness to the Church as the Body of Christ on earth (Eph. 1:22–23); and

WHEREAS, The Church is called to build itself up in love as it receives God's grace through Word and Sacrament, as it is continually sent out into the world to serve the Lord with gladness and bring the Gospel to all nations; and

WHEREAS, The world continues to be a dark place where the evil one prowls to deceive believers that God's kingdom and reign are diminishing in a culture which has moved farther and farther away from its Creator, Redeemer, and Lord; and

WHEREAS, God so loved the world to the point of sending His own Son, Jesus, to the cross to redeem and save the world through Him (John 3:16–17); and

WHEREAS, The Church, Christ's Body in the midst of the world today, functions with the same love for all people, bearing witness to God's grace and mercy to humanity in the shadow of the cross and the light of the empty tomb; and

WHEREAS, Christ calls His Church to be the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:14) and, through His Word, commissions us to "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); and

WHEREAS, Jesus, the Head of His Body, the Church, remains victorious for He is risen from the dead, having conquered sin, death, and the power of the evil one; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention steadfastly encourage God's people, the Church, in their mission to BE the church outside of its institutional walls; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod foster and develop a missional culture in our church body as we walk in witness, mercy, and life together as Christ's disciples in the world today.

Board of Directors, Southeastern District; Board of Directors, Florida-Georgia District

1-14

To Recognize, Affirm, and Give Thanks for Mission Training Center, Concordia University—Portland

WHEREAS, The Gospel writer Luke describes the devotion of the believers in Acts 2:42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer"; and the apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:9: "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put into practice. And the God of peace will be with you," and further in 2 Thessalonians 2:15: "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold on to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter," and in 1 Timothy 4:13: "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching"; and

WHEREAS, Luther himself, in the Preface to the Large Catechism, section 19, states: "Let them constantly read and teach, learn and meditate and ponder. Let them never stop until they have proved by experience and are certain." And he further insisted that we never stop studying Scripture and learning how to apply it for ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has a long history of supporting and celebrating lay ministry training—for example, the Lutheran Lay Training Institute programs (*Lutheran Witness*, Nov. 1960; 2011 LCMS blog/commentary/celebrating 50 years of LCMS lay ministry; and so many more); and

WHEREAS, The 1962 Synod convention passed Res. 11-08, recognizing the importance of and support of ongoing mission education; and

WHEREAS, The continued teaching and training of our laypeople for service in areas of mission and ministry and roles of leadership have always been of paramount importance to the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The Mission Training Center (MTC) on the campus of Concordia University—Portland develops people for God's mission through training opportunities centered in the Bible and taught through the lenses of God's mission, as participants of MTC confidently and competently reach into their communities with appropriate and contextual proclamation and disciple-making ministry; and

WHEREAS, The MTC, through 2015, has had 974 students (national and international) who have taken advantage of the 20 courses offered through which participants grow and are developed in their missional skills and gifts for ministry; and

WHEREAS, Over 30 LCMS districts utilize the MTC for preparing people for active mission and ministry in their congregations and communities; therefore be it

Resolved, That all congregations and districts of the LCMS consider what the Mission Training Center has to offer and be encouraged to promote and take advantage of this unique and valuable gift for equipping and training our laypeople for mission and ministry and roles of leadership in their congregations and communities; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention give thanks to God for the ministry of the Mission Training Center, recognize its value in training and developing the laity for mission and ministry and roles in leadership, and affirm its importance and impact to the mission of the church.

Board of Directors
Northwest District

To Provide Missionaries and Outreach Techniques to Local Congregations

WHEREAS, The West-Southwest Region is geographically the largest and one of the most populous if not the most populous region in the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, We are experiencing a major decline in church participation, particularly from the younger generation and a natural reduction of older generation membership. Some of this decline is the result of a number of factors many of which are unique to the West-Southwest Region. This decline, if not addressed quickly and aggressively, will result in the closure and/or consolidation of many shrinking congregations; and

WHEREAS, Many individual congregations do not have the resources or training to research practical, effective local outreach techniques to a variety of younger individuals and families. Furthermore, the aging of the membership in most congregations limits the outreach that these congregations are able to do without outside help; and

WHEREAS, Secular progressive attitudes and practices provide significant roadblocks to typical local outreach both at college campuses and in our communities. Added to that, the fact that so many people in this region have never been associated with a Christian church and are from other countries makes it very difficult to reach them with the Gospel message; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod take on the task of researching and providing practical outreach techniques to this region that are simple enough for the small local congregations to use most effectively; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod train and prepare a large quantity of missionaries to work in the West-Southwest Region to assist congregations and to do mission outreach within the region; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod provide the resulting techniques free of charge to all congregations in the region.

Emanuel
Santa Barbara, CA

To Assist Congregations in Their Privilege to Welcome All People Regardless of What Sexual Identity They Profess

WHEREAS, Our Lord tells us in Matthew 9 that He has come not for the righteous but sinners; and

WHEREAS, James 2:10 reminds us, “Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it”; and

WHEREAS, Pastors and laity struggle to relate as Christians to their families and communities and also to welcome people in the public assembly of the church whom they perceive to be in open, manifest, and unrepentant sin of a sexual nature; and

WHEREAS, All people are always invited and welcome to hear the proclamation of Law and Gospel in the public assembly of the church; therefore be it

Resolved, That the congregations of the Montana District be urged to study God’s Word and consider how they might share the grace and truth of God’s Word with all who pass through their doors; and be it further

Resolved, That the Montana District memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to direct the Office of the President to give guidance to congregations that they might remain steadfast in speaking the truth in love by preaching the Gospel to all, and that God’s people might be protected from giving the appearance of condoning the public sins of those they desire to serve.

Montana District

FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

2. International Witness

REPORTS

**R1, R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R1.4, R7, R14, R54, R55, R56,
R57, R58, R59**

OVERTURES

2-01

To Maintain Proper Balance in Foreign Missions between Congregations' Right of Self-Governance and Commitment to Walk Together

WHEREAS, God's Word speaks to the responsibility of all Christians to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20) and is replete with examples of individuals and congregations directly caring for the needs of missionaries and foreign mission fields (Romans 15:25–29; 1 Corinthians 16:1–14; 2 Corinthians 8:1–9:15; Philippians 2:19–30; 4:10–20; etc.); and

WHEREAS, Article VII of the LCMS Constitution states that in relation to its members, the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation's right of self-government it is but an advisory body; and

WHEREAS, Article XIV of the Constitution states that the Synod in convention may adopt bylaws that are consistent with and do not contradict the Constitution of the Synod, which controls and supersedes such bylaws and all other rules and regulations of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of Synod is for congregations to join together in ministry (Bylaw 1.1.1):

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. The Synod is organized to work in support of and on behalf of congregations to assist them in carrying out their ministries as they seek to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, the members of His body, and the world which stands in need of the Word and the impact of His redeeming love.

(a) The Synod functions in support of its member congregations by providing assistance as congregations conduct their ministries locally, as well as their ministries at large.

(b) The Synod on behalf of its member congregations administers those ministries that can be accomplished more effectively in association with other member congregations through the Synod. In this way member congregations utilize the Synod to assist them in carrying out their functions of worship, witness, teaching and nurture, service, and support.

and

WHEREAS, There has been conflict between congregations' individual mission work and the work of the Synod as a joint body; and

WHEREAS, 2010 Res. 8-32B encourages the Synod to study Article VII of the Constitution, including study of "Congregations and Synod, Background Material on the Advisory Nature of the LCMS," along with opinions of the Commission on Constitutional Matters related to this topic; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 09-2573 states in part that "there is a common understanding that a congregation exercises its self-government...in carrying out...its own ministry programs and financial affairs..."; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.8.3 states in part, "Upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board shall serve as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas"; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 states in part, "Congregations may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for work in foreign areas without taking into consideration policies developed and determined for this purpose by the Board of International Mission as the only sending agency"; and

WHEREAS, It is desirable to maintain the right of local congregations to engage in mission activity while at the same time working to ensure that the work of the Synod goes on in good order and without conflict; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Northern Illinois District request the Synod's Commission on Handbook to review Bylaw 3.8.3 and relevant bylaws and then make the necessary recommendations to amend the bylaws to maintain the proper balance between the congregations' right of self-governance and our commitment to walk together in foreign mission work; and be it further

Resolved, That the Board for International Mission be requested to publish as quickly as possible the policies referenced in CCM Opinion 14-2724 ("without taking into consideration *policies developed and determined for this purpose* by the Board for International Mission"); and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook report its recommendations to the 2016 LCMS convention for action to be taken by the convention.

Northern Illinois District

2-02

To Encourage Proper Balance in Foreign Missions between Congregations' Right of Self-Governance and Commitment to Walk Together

WHEREAS, God's Word speaks to the responsibility of all Christians to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18–20) and is replete with examples of individuals and congregations directly caring for the needs of missionaries and foreign mission fields (Romans 15:25–29; 1 Cor. 16:1–14; 2 Cor. 8:1–9:15; Phil. 2:19–30; 4:10–20; etc.); and

WHEREAS, Constitution Art. VII 1 states that "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 is but an advisory body"; and

WHEREAS, Article XIV states that "the Synod in convention may adopt bylaws that are consistent with and do not contradict the Constitution of the Synod, which controls and supersedes such bylaws and all other rules and regulations of the Synod"; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of the Synod is for congregations to join together in ministry, as Bylaw 1.1.1 states:

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. The Synod is organized to work in support of and on behalf of congregations to assist them in carrying out their ministries as they seek to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, the members

of His body, and the world which stands in need of the Word and the impact of His redeeming love.

- (a) The Synod functions in support of its member congregations by providing assistance as congregations conduct their ministries locally, as well as their ministries at large.
- (b) The Synod on behalf of its member congregations administers those ministries that can be accomplished more effectively in association with other member congregations through the Synod. In this way member congregations utilize the Synod to assist them in carrying out their functions of worship, witness, teaching and nurture, service, and support.

and

WHEREAS, There has been conflict between congregations' individual mission work and the work of the Synod as a joint body; and

WHEREAS, 2010 Res. 8-32B encourages the Synod to study Article VII of the Constitution, including a study of "Congregations and Synod, Background Material on the Advisory Nature of the LCMS" along with opinions of the CCM related to this topic; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 09-2573 states in part that "there is a common understanding that a congregation exercises its self-government ... in carrying out ... its own ministry programs and financial affairs"; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.8.3 says in part, "Upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board shall serve as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas"; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 states in part, "Congregations may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for work in foreign areas without taking into consideration policies developed and determined for this purpose by the Board for International Mission as the only sending agency"; and

WHEREAS, It is desirable to maintain the right of local congregations to engage in mission activity while at the same time working to ensure that the work of the Synod goes on in good order and without conflict; and

WHEREAS, Calling rostered workers and placing them overseas requires a commitment to exercise proper ecclesiastical oversight of those workers as well as the ability to evacuate them quickly in cases of emergency and thus is a task properly entrusted solely to the Board for International Mission and the various recognized service organizations (RSOs) that work with the board, since congregations and districts usually lack the ability to do these things well; and

WHEREAS, Making donations of money to international missions does not entail the same degree of responsibility that calling a rostered worker does; and

WHEREAS, The Council of Presidents is in close contact with both the leadership of the Synod (including the Board for International Missions) and the congregations of the Synod and thus is uniquely able to help congregations and Synod find a way to ensure that neither congregations nor the Synod are unduly hindered by the work of the other; therefore be it

Resolved, That the last paragraph of Bylaw 3.8.3 be amended to read as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.8.3 ...Upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board shall serve as the only sending agency through which rostered workers ~~and funds~~ are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and

releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas.

and be it further

Resolved, That the Board for International Mission be requested to publish as quickly as possible the policies referenced in CCM Opinion 14-2724 ("without taking into consideration policies developed and determined for this purpose by the Board for International Mission"); and be it finally

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents appoint a taskforce to examine further how congregations and the Board for International Mission may work together better so that congregations and the Synod's board can better support one another, and that this taskforce recommend to the 2019 Synod convention whatever necessary changes should be made to the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws, and/or policies in order to maintain a proper balance between the work of Synod and its member congregations in foreign missions.

Board of Directors
Northern Illinois District

2-03

To Amend Synod Bylaws 3.8.3 and 1.1.1

WHEREAS, In the history of the Synod, the Synod and its districts have never discouraged the efforts of congregations, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations, districts, and other agencies of the Synod from engaging in outreach of the Gospel, both domestically and in foreign fields; and

WHEREAS, Each district of the Synod has the responsibility as the Synod in its place to support and encourage the congregations, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations and other agencies of the district and Synod within its area of responsibility, and has done so historically; and,

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 indicates that when 1981 Res. 1-05A "instructed that districts 'consult with the Board for Missions before directly funding a synodical overseas mission,'" it clearly meant that districts can directly fund Synod overseas missions, but when they do, they must consult (for coordination, not for permission) with the Board for Missions; and

WHEREAS, When CCM Opinion 14-2724 indicates that the 1981 Synod convention "greatly expanded the bylaw section governing the Board for Mission Services," which resulted in newly adopted Bylaw 2.213, requiring the Board for Mission Services to "formulate, recommend, review, and supervise the mission policies of the Synod [Synod defined in Bylaw 1.2.1[u] as referring collectively to the association of self-governing Lutheran congregations and all its agencies, and not including individual members, congregations, auxiliaries nor recognized service organizations], recommend and monitor budgets, review organizational effectiveness, and provide for an aggressive and united mission effort for the Synod," it clearly meant that other agencies of the Synod connected to the Synod may have their own foreign mission efforts, but such agencies should inform and consult with the Board for Mission Services about their efforts, to the end that there will be a "united mission effort for the Synod," and such bylaw does not address at all the mission efforts of congregations, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations; and

WHEREAS, When CCM Opinion 14-2724 indicates that the 1981 Synod convention expanded the role of the Board for Mission Services, requiring the Board for Mission Services to "call, appoint, assign, withdraw, and release missionaries (pastors and teachers) and

other workers for the ministries and areas *within its direct responsibility* (emphasis added),” it clearly meant that other agencies of the Synod may have their own foreign mission efforts *within their own direct responsibility*, and such bylaw does not address at all the mission efforts of congregations, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 concludes “that for the sake of good order and effectiveness, the Board for International Mission is to serve as the Synod’s only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod,” but it does not include the words from 1981 *Handbook* Bylaw 2.213, to “call, appoint, assign, withdraw, and release missionaries (pastors and teachers) and other workers for the ministries and areas within its direct responsibility, *always safeguarding the rights of the partner churches and workers involved*” (emphasis added), which language limits the authority of the Board for Missions for the mission workers within its direct responsibility; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724, referring to 2013 Res. 1-08, “To Work Together in Mission,” called for a twofold response: First, “*Resolved*, That the Synod, by the next convention, develop and provide a mission best-practices policy document for districts and congregations engaged in mission projects to assist them to better carry out their mission and their life together,” indicating that districts and congregations have and are recognized to have mission work and practices of their own, and because they have their own mission work and practices, the Synod should assist and support those efforts by developing a best-practices policy; and second, “That these best practices include *encouragement* to districts and congregations to *communicate their international mission activities* to the Synod’s Director of Church Relations and Offices of National and International Mission *for the purposes of healthy coordination and good stewardship*” (emphasis added), indicating that districts and congregations can have their own mission activities and when they do they are encouraged to communicate these activities to the Synod for coordination and good stewardship; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 Section C, “Congregations and Foreign Missions,” referring to the Task Force II Report to the 1981 Synod convention, indicates “two basic functions guiding the Synod in its restructuring at that time,” both of which indicate the Synod has no “control” over congregations (in this area, the Synod is not hierarchical but congregational in polity), first “*In support of the congregation*,” where the Synod is to “help the congregations” and “assist the congregations in their mission and ministry,” and second “*In behalf of congregations*,” where the Synod serves “in behalf of the congregations by enabling congregations to do together that which individual congregations could not do by themselves or could not do very well, such as foreign mission work and the training of pastors and teachers at colleges and seminaries,” and which clearly indicates (“could not do very well”) that congregations can and are free to do foreign mission work, albeit perhaps not as well as when assisted by the Synod; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 continues with the two basic functions being “closely reflected in paragraphs (a) and (b) of current Bylaw 1.1.1 (2013 *Handbook*, p. 23): (a) The Synod functions *in support of* its member congregations *by providing assistance* as congregations conduct their ministries locally, as well as *their ministries at large*, and (b) The Synod on behalf of its member congregations administers those ministries that can be accomplished more effectively in association with other member congregations through the Synod. In this way *member congregations utilize the Synod to assist*

them in carrying out *their functions* of worship, witness, teaching and nurture, service and support,” (emphasis added), which in no way indicates that the Synod has the authority to control the congregations; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 then refers to Constitution Article VII, drawing its own conclusions in regard to it, which interpretation would be better conducted only after the Synod has studied Article VII as 2010 Synod Convention Res. 8-32B, “To Study Article VII of Synod’s Constitution,” calls upon the Synod to do; and

WHEREAS, In regard to Auxiliaries and Foreign Missions, CCM Opinion 14-2724 correctly uses the bylaw words that auxiliaries are required to “operate with freedom and self-determination as a ministry...while complying with the responsibilities” outlined (Bylaw 6.1.2 [c]),” then lists those responsibilities as “*coordinat[ing] plans and programs with those of the Synod through regular sharing and contact*” (Bylaw 6.1.2 [d]), to “*report annually to the President of the Synod, provide an annual program report to the Synod, keep the Synod advised of any new program under consideration, honor and uphold the doctrine and practice of the Synod, and, while operating with freedom and self-determination in their mission independent of control by the Synod, respect protocol documents that exist between the Synod and her partner churches* (Bylaw 6.1.3)” (emphasis added), does not give the Synod control, but rather denies control on the part of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, In regard to Recognized Service Organizations and Foreign Missions, CCM Opinion 14-2724 correctly indicates that “Therefore Bylaw 3.8.3 does not apply to recognized service organizations,” but it incorrectly adds “*per se*” after that phrase, for Bylaw 3.8.3 simply does not apply to recognized service organizations, regardless of any other bylaw wording that the CCM might incorrectly conclude in regard to the Board of International Mission (a policy-making board in regard to congregations, districts, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations, as well as to colleges, universities, and seminaries, even though Opinion 14-2724 does not refer to colleges, universities, and seminaries) or the Office of International Mission, for neither the Board nor the Office of International Mission is given any “control” over these entities connected to the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The interpretation of the Constitution and Bylaws of CCM Opinion 14-2724 indicates a need for a clarification of the bylaws; therefore be it

Resolved, That the last paragraph of Bylaw 3.8.3 be amended to read:

PROPOSED WORDING

3.8.3 The Board for International Mission is charged...

Upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board shall serve as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas on behalf of national Synod or the agencies of national Synod of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas. However, the Office of International Missions shall issue all such calls as may be requested by other agencies of the Synod acting on behalf of national Synod in the areas of their responsibility. Districts may continue to issue such calls on behalf of districts and agencies of the districts. Nothing shall prohibit or restrict the right of auxiliaries, recognized service organizations, and congregations to call workers to any mission field, although each is requested to cooperate with the Board for International Mission in advising the Board for International Mission of such efforts.”

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.1.1. be amended to add a subsection (c):

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. ...

(c) Neither the Synod nor any board, commission, or agency on its behalf shall adopt any policy or practice which may inhibit or restrict individual members or congregations, or members of member congregations, 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 be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention declare its understanding that the calls issued pursuant to Bylaw 3.8.3 by the Board for International Mission refer to calls issued also on behalf of the agencies of the Synod, not otherwise recognized theologically as having the ability to issue a call, so as to provide a proper theological underpinning for such calls, and not as a restriction on the ability of agencies to send workers into foreign mission fields or financially support such mission efforts within their areas of responsibility; and be it further

Resolved, That nothing in the bylaws of the Synod shall ever be interpreted so as to limit efforts to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world, but shall only be understood as requesting information which might allow Synod to support—or assist in connecting potential support—congregations and individual members, to assist in connecting potential mission partners, and to provide best practices information which could assist the efforts of individual members and congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention recognize its duties to support and assist recognized service organizations, auxiliaries, and all others, as long as their efforts support the objectives of the Synod, while never inhibiting such efforts; reaffirm the partnership in the Gospel of the Synod with all such organizations; and reaffirm that the Synod shall never inhibit the mission of such recognized service organizations and auxiliaries; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention recognize that its need to coordinate the actions of auxiliaries and recognized service organizations is fulfilled by the auxiliaries' duty to report to the President of the Synod pursuant to Bylaw 6.1.3 (a), and the recognized service organizations' compliance with Bylaw 6.2.3; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod promptly fulfill his responsibilities under 2010 Synod Convention Res. 8-32B regarding a synodwide study of Article VII; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention for the adoption of this resolution.

Texas District; First Trinity, Tonawanda, NY; Salem, Tomball, TX; Salem, Buffalo, NY; King of Kings, Round Rock, TX

2-04

To Overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724

WHEREAS, The Word of God (Acts 13) clearly reveals that in the first century of the New Testament, a local congregation of believers in the Lord Jesus, assembled in Antioch, after much prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, freely consecrated and sent missionaries, notably Barnabas and Saul, into mission fields; and

WHEREAS, Art. III 2 of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod identifies as an objective of the Synod to “strengthen

congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world”; and

WHEREAS, Art. VII 1 of the Constitution of the LCMS states, “In its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation’s right of self-government it is but an advisory body”; and

WHEREAS, Art. XIV of the Constitution states, “The Synod in convention may adopt bylaws that are consistent with and do not contradict the Constitution of the Synod, which controls and supersedes such bylaws and all other rules and regulations of the Synod”; and

WHEREAS, 2010 Res. 8-32B encourages the Synod to study Art. VII of the Constitution, including study of “Congregations and Synod, Background Material on the Advisory Nature of the LCMS” along with opinions of the Commission on Constitutional Matters related to this topic (including CCM Opinion 09-2573, listed in a WHEREAS paragraph in Res. 8-32B); and

WHEREAS, 1983 Res. 5-10A in a *Resolved* clause states that the LCMS reaffirms that its synodical polity is essentially and principally congregational in nature; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 09-2573 states in part that “there is a common understanding that a congregation exercises its self-government ... in carrying out ... its own ministry programs and financial affairs”; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 3.8.3 deals only with who has authority to send ministers of religion and other workers into Synod foreign mission fields, and prior bylaws have been careful not to restrict congregational activity specifically relating to whom congregations could send funds overseas; and nothing in the current bylaws restrict or could restrict the right of member congregations to (a) fund ministries in foreign countries, or (b) send/fund congregation members for service with organizations seeking to share the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, 1983 Res. 5-37 amending the bylaws only dealt with who on behalf of Synod as a whole could send missionaries at the expense of the Synod, and where the restriction applied, it being a sending bylaw only, clearly not applicable to congregations in any event; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724, referring to 2013 Res. 1-08, “To Work Together in Mission,” called for a two-fold response: First, “*Resolved*, That the Synod, by the next convention, develop and provide a mission best-practices policy document for districts and congregations engaged in mission projects to assist them to better carry out their mission and their life together,” indicating that districts and congregations have and are recognized to have mission work and practices of their own, and because they have their own mission work and practices, the Synod should assist and support those efforts by developing a best-practices policy; and second, “That these best practices include *encouragement* to districts and congregations to *communicate their international mission activities* to the Synod’s Director of Church Relations and Offices of National and International Mission *for the purposes of healthy coordination and stewardship*” (emphasis added), indicating that districts and congregations can have their own mission activities, and when they do they are encouraged to communicate these activities to the Synod for coordination and good stewardship; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 states in part, “Congregations may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for work in foreign areas without taking into consideration

policies developed and determined for this purpose by the Board of International Mission as the only sending agency”; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 incorrectly restricts the mission outreach of congregations and others to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world; therefore be it

Resolved, That the congregations of the Texas District and of the LCMS be encouraged, with much prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to send missionaries to foreign areas; and be it further

Resolved, That the Texas District affirms and encourages congregations, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations, districts, and individual members of the Synod in their efforts to give bold witness by word and deed, to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness to all the world; and be it further

Resolved, That nothing in the bylaws of Synod should ever be interpreted to limit efforts by congregations, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations, districts, and individual members of the Synod to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness to all the world, but only be interpreted as requesting information which might allow the Synod to support (and to assist in connecting potential support for) congregations and individual members, to assist in connecting potential mission partners, and to provide best-practices information which could assist the efforts; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to adopt this resolution and to overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724, to be thereby declared null and void and of no effect.

Texas District; Trinity, Utica, MI; Immanuel, Grand Rapids, MI; Marco, Marco Island, FL; King of Kings, Omaha, NE; Amazing Grace, Oxford, FL; Board of Directors, Eastern District; California-Nevada-Hawaii District; Board of Directors, Michigan District; St. Matthew, Walled Lake, MI; Grace, Visalia, CA; Pacific Southwest District; Pacific Southwest District; St. John, Dublin, OH; Village, Bronxville, NY; Messiah, Lincoln, NE; Trinity, Hanford, CA; Prince of Peace, Orlando, FL; Redeemer, Fresno, CA; Bethany, Menlo Park, CA; Orlando West Circuit, Florida-Georgia District; The Rock, Seward, NE; Trinity, Delray Beach, FL; Christ, Mantua, OH

2-05

To Request CCM to Revise and Clarify Opinion 14-2724

WHEREAS, The Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM), in its Opinion 14-2724 concerning the applicability of Bylaw 3.8.3, states in part in its response to Question 3 that “congregations may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for work in foreign areas”; and

WHEREAS, This statement can be misinterpreted by congregations to prohibit support of all international mercy efforts outside the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The actual wording of Bylaw 3.8.3 states “Upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board shall serve as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the *foreign mission areas of the Synod*” (emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, This section of Bylaw 3.8.3 necessarily defines responsibility for the function of sending actual LCMS mission workers to foreign fields to spread the Good News of the Gospel and the direct support of those workers in the harvest; and

WHEREAS, This section of Bylaw 3.8.3 does not address financial or material support of foreign mercy efforts that are not a part of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The opinion of CCM goes on to imply that congregations which provide financial or material support of non-Synod mercy efforts are “participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities,” which is contrary to the teaching of Christ in Matthew 25:31–46, that mercy should be shown to all in need; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention direct the CCM to revise and clarify its response to Question 3 of its opinion and to reassure congregations that their financial and material support of international mercy efforts outside the Synod is not prohibited and is not necessarily linked to syncretistic or unionistic practices.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

2-06

To Amend Synod Bylaws to Recognize Authority of Congregations to Send Missionaries

WHEREAS, The Lord Jesus Christ sent us into His mission field with the words, “Go you, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19); and

WHEREAS, The last words that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ spoke on earth were, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), clearly charging all of His people to bear brave witness and to proclaim the Gospel to all the world, giving all of us, the Synod, congregations, and individuals, the promise of the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out this command; and

WHEREAS, The church at Antioch, while worshipping, was instructed by the Holy Spirit to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which God had called them. The congregation recognized this divine call to missionary service and released Saul and Barnabas to serve in this evangelistic mission (Acts 13:1–3). This is the basis for the right of congregations to call and send missionaries; and

WHEREAS, God’s Word does not say that the church at Antioch consulted with the church in Jerusalem or any of the other apostles before releasing Paul and Barnabas to their missionary service; and

WHEREAS, The Treatise on the Power and the Primacy of the Pope states, “For wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Wherefore it is necessary for the church to retain the right of calling, electing, and ordaining ministers. This right is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church. It is as Paul testifies to the Ephesians when he says, ‘When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men’ (Eph. 4:8, 11, 12). He enumerates pastors and teachers among the gifts belonging exclusively to the church, and he adds that they are given for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ” (Tr 63, Tappert). Ephesians 4 also lists apostles, prophets, and evangelists as those gifts which God has given to His Church. By extension, it is the right of the congregation to call missionaries for the expansion of the Kingdom of God; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod recognizes the congregation as the entity through which God calls pastors to proclaim the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, The Board for International Mission, the districts of the Synod, and other noncongregational entities derive their authority to call from the congregations which they represent; and

WHEREAS, CCM decision 14-2724 states, “Foreign missions is a jurisdiction that the Synod has retained for itself (Bylaw 4.1.5). Districts and congregations may not call rostered church workers for service in foreign areas, as supported throughout the Bylaws of the Synod.” This interpretation impinges on the rights of congregations to serve as the agency through which God calls His workers; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention affirm and encourage the biblical right of each congregation to call pastors and missionaries to serve the congregation locally and/or to serve on their behalf anywhere there is a need for the Good News of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention affirm the rights of those who represent congregations (such as the Board for International Mission, districts of the Synod, RSOs, and LCMS mission agencies) to call workers on behalf of the congregations they represent; and be it further

Resolved, That the Northwest District memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to amend its Bylaws to reflect this theological truth. Specifically, Bylaws 3.8.3 and 4.1.5 should be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.8.3 Upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board shall serve as ~~the only sending~~ agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas.

4.1.5 Jurisdiction with respect to everything that is administered by or for the entire Synod resides in the national Synod itself. Jurisdiction includes but is not limited to general supervision of doctrine and practice; coordination of foreign missions; institutions of the Synod; qualification for ordination, commissioning, and installation of ordained and commissioned ministers and requirements for individual as well as congregational membership in the Synod; publication of official religious periodicals, conduct of negotiations and affiliations with other church bodies; and the like.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.1.1 be amended to add an additional paragraph (c):

1.1.1 Committed to a common confession and mission, congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod join with one another...

(c) Neither the Synod nor any board, commission, or agency on its behalf shall adopt any policy or practice which may inhibit or restrict individual members or congregations in giving bold witness by word or deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and extend that Gospel witness into all the world.

and be it finally

Resolved, That congregations be expected to coordinate and communicate with their circuits, districts, and the Board for International Mission when making missionary calls so that everything be done decently and in good order.

Board of Directors, Northwest District; Prince of Peace, Portland, OR; Board of Directors, Florida-Georgia District

2-07

To Overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724

WHEREAS, Article III 2 of the LCMS Constitution identifies an objective of the Synod as to “strengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world”; and

WHEREAS, Article VII 1 of the Synod’s Constitution recognizes, “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”; and

WHEREAS, In the history of the Synod, neither the Synod nor the CNH District has ever discouraged the efforts by congregations, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations, districts, and other agencies of the Synod from engaging in outreach of the Gospel, both domestically and in foreign fields; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 wrongfully attempts to restrict the mission outreach of congregations and others to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness to all the world; therefore be it

Resolved, That the CNH District affirms and encourages all actions by congregations, auxiliaries, recognized service organizations, districts, and individual members of the Synod, as well as agencies of the district, in their efforts to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness to all the world; and be it further

Resolved, That nothing in the Bylaws of Synod should ever be construed to limit efforts to give bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness to all the world, but only be construed as requesting information which might allow Synod to support (and to assist in connecting potential support for) congregations and individual members, to assist in connecting potential mission partners, and to provide best practices information which could assist the efforts of individual members and congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That CCM Opinion 14-2724 be overruled pursuant to Bylaw 3.9.2.2 (c); and be it finally

Resolved, That the CNH District memorialize to the Synod the adoption of this resolution.

California-Nevada-Hawaii District

2-08

To Amend Bylaws to Reflect Congregations’ Privilege to Send Mission Funds and Fund Missionaries

WHEREAS, Jesus sends His disciples into the world in order to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19–20); and

WHEREAS, The church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas on their mission journey without first consulting with the church at Jerusalem (Acts 13:1–3); likewise, Epaphras was sent during Paul’s mission efforts in Ephesus to carry the Gospel to Colossae and Hierapolis and

Laodicea (Col. 1:6–7; 4:12–13) without approval and sending by the church at Antioch; and

WHEREAS, This decentralization in the sending of missionaries and funding of missionaries to carry the Gospel and enact the Gospel in works of mercy and service is a blessing to the Church at large in carrying out the mission of God who “wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4), and to the local congregation which is thereby invigorated for its own local mission work, as happened to the brothers who supported Paul during his imprisonment in Philippians 1:14, when they were made “more bold to speak the word without fear”; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions state clearly when speaking of the local congregation, “For wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Wherefore it is necessary for the church to retain the right of calling, electing, and ordaining ministers. This right is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church” (Tr 63); and

WHEREAS, For these reasons LCMS congregations regularly participate in supporting the mission efforts of organizations outside of our own church body which are having a positive impact on the ministry of the Gospel in both local and foreign lands; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 14-2724 has recently stated that “foreign missions is a jurisdiction that the Synod has retained for itself (Bylaw 4.1.5). Districts and congregations may not call rostered church workers for service in foreign areas”; “districts may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for doing work in foreign areas except through the Board for International Mission”; and “congregations may not send funds to mission societies and non-Synod entities for work in foreign areas without taking into consideration policies developed and determined for this purpose by the Board for International Mission as the only sending agency”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention amend the Synod’s Bylaws as follows to reflect the biblical theology above:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.8.3 ... Upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board shall serve as ~~the only sending~~ agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas.

4.1.5 Jurisdiction with respect to everything that is administered by or for the entire Synod resides in the national Synod itself. Jurisdiction includes but is not limited to general supervision of doctrine and practice; coordination of foreign missions; institutions of the Synod; qualification for ordination, commissioning, and installation of ordained and commissioned ministers and requirements for individual as well as congregational membership in the Synod; publication of official religious periodicals; conduct of negotiations and affiliations with other church bodies; and the like.

and be it further

Resolved, That for the sake of good order, congregations seeking to send missionaries to a foreign land coordinate with their circuit, district, and the Board for International Mission; and be it finally

Resolved, That congregations be encouraged to continue to participate in the funding of missionaries sent through the Board for International Mission in appreciation for their faithful work on behalf of the Synod at large.

Holy Cross
Spokane, WA

2-09

To Overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724 and Amend Bylaw 3.8.3

WHEREAS, The CCM in its opinion 14-2724 noted: “the 1981 (Synodical) convention Res. 1-05A, ‘To Go Forward in Overseas Missions,’ calling the spread of the Gospel to all the world the ‘primary mission of the church’”; and

WHEREAS, The CCM in the section “A History of Bylaw 3.8.3” of its opinion concludes that “the bylaw’s historical background clarifies the intent of this specific provision of the bylaw, i.e., that *for the sake of good order and effectiveness*, the Board for International Mission is to serve as the Synod’s only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod” (emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, It is broadly known throughout the Synod that the Synod itself for the last several decades has been encouraging districts, circuits, congregations, auxiliaries, and RSOs to engage in the direct financial support of international missions; and

WHEREAS, Direct mission support and action by districts, circuits, congregations, auxiliaries, and RSOs was in fact acknowledged by the Synod in its adoption of 2013 Res. 1-08, which was quoted in the CCM’s opinion 14-2724 as follows:

During the last 50 years people’s ideas about mission have changed due to the ease of global transportation and communication, the affluence of North American society, and the desire of people to have direct and personal contact with a specific mission project” (2013 Res. 1-08, “To Work Together in Mission,” *Proceedings*, p. 103).

The CCM noted that the convention’s response was twofold:

Resolved, That the Synod, by the next convention, develop and provide a mission best-practices policy document for districts and congregations engaged in mission projects to assist them better to carry out their mission in their life together; and be it further

Resolved, That these best practices include *encouragement* to districts and congregations *to communicate their international mission activities* to the Synod’s Director of Church Relations and Offices of National and International Mission for the purposes of healthy coordination and good stewardship.” (*Proceedings*, p. 103, emphasis added)

and

WHEREAS, The clear implications of the language of Res. 1-08, including these resolves, is that the Synod knows and acknowledges that districts and congregations are engaged in direct international mission work and that the Synod desires and encourages communication of the same to the mission offices of the Synod “for the purposes of healthy coordination and good stewardship” and not for the purposes of limiting, controlling, or ending of such direct international mission work; and

WHEREAS, The CCM makes an argument from silence, concluding that “by not altering the wording or meaning of Bylaw 3.8.3 the Synod itself has provided input into the proper understanding and application of the bylaw” (CCM Opinion 14-2724). On the contrary, the Synod acknowledged the ongoing direct mission activity by districts and congregations and nowise resolved that such direct mission activity should cease due to the existence of Bylaw 3.8.3, which could and, if the CCM’s conclusion is allowed to stand, should have been cited; therefore be it

Resolved, That the New England District memorialize the Synod in convention to overrule CCM Opinion 14-2724, thereby rendering it null and void; and be it further

Resolved, That the last sentence of Bylaw 3.8.3 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board ~~shall~~may serve as ~~the only~~a sending agency through which workers and funds ~~are~~may be sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas. This bylaw shall in no way be interpreted as forbidding or limiting the direct work of and financial support by districts, circuits, congregations, auxiliaries, and RSOs for international missions, either specifically or generally. However, districts, circuits, congregations, auxiliaries, and RSOs are encouraged to communicate their international mission activities to the Synod's Director of Church Relations and Offices of National and International Mission for the purposes of healthy coordination and good stewardship.

and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod authorize those individuals and entities charged with the editing and publishing of the 2016 *Handbook* to conform the language of any other Bylaw so that it is in conformity and harmony with the intent and language of Bylaw 3.8.3 as amended above.

First, Hanford, CA; Redeemer, Fresno, CA; New England District

2-10

To Amend Bylaw 3.8.3 and Recognize, Affirm, and Protect Authority of Congregations to Send Missionaries

WHEREAS, The Lord Jesus Christ, the true and only Head of the Church, sends His people into the world so that they might accomplish His mission of making disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18–20); and

WHEREAS, The Lord Jesus Christ, after His encounter with two disciples on the way to Emmaus, appeared to “the eleven and those who were with them gathered together” (Luke 24:33) and said to them: “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:46–49); and

WHEREAS, This same Lord Jesus Christ, speaking through His special servant Stephen, one of the seven deacons mentioned in Acts 6:1–6, proclaimed His Word, both Law and Gospel, with the hope that the Council in Jerusalem might repent of their unbelief and come to faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 7:1–53); and

WHEREAS, In response to Stephen’s witness and message, the Council, instead of repenting of their unbelief and receiving the forgiveness of sins by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, began a great persecution in Jerusalem and the disciples “were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles ... those who were scattered went about *preaching the word*. Philip [another one of the seven deacons listed in Acts 6:1–6] went down to the city of Samaria and *proclaimed* to them the Christ” (Acts 8:1, 4–5; emphasis added); and “those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, *speaking the word* to none except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene who on coming Antioch spoke to the Greeks also, *preaching* the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number that believed turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:19–21; emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, It was on a road to Damascus that the Lord’s plan for sending Paul on his missionary journeys was first made known when the Lord revealed to Ananias that Paul would be His special instrument “to *carry My name* before the Gentiles and kings and sons of Israel” (Acts 9:15; emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, The Lord, in order to accomplish this sending of Paul used the church in Antioch, while His people were gathered for worship, to *call and send out* both Barnabas and Saul (Paul) to those places where the Holy Spirit would use them as His messengers and proclaimers of the Gospel when He said: “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off” (Acts 13:2–3); and

WHEREAS, In these selected verses from the Book of Acts, we have several examples of God’s people engaged in making known the Gospel through their witness and Gospel proclamation (Romans 10:14–17) because “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17); and

WHEREAS, Art. II of the LCMS Constitution states that “the Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation ... 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”; and

WHEREAS, Art. III of the LCMS Constitution states that “the Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall ... 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 the Gospel witness *into all the world*” and to “provide protection for congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers in the performance of their *official duties* and the *maintenance of their rights*” (Constitution, Art. III 2, 9; emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, Art. VII 1 of the LCMS Constitution states that “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*” (emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, Art. XIV of the LCMS Constitution states that “the Synod in convention may adopt bylaws that are consistent with and do not contradict the Constitution of Synod, which *controls and supersedes such bylaws and all other rules and regulations of Synod*” (emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, CCM opinion 14-2724 states that foreign missions is a jurisdiction that the Synod has reserved solely for itself (CCM Minutes, Sept. 26–27, 2014, pp. 37–38) and that LCMS congregations and districts may not call and send church workers for ministry service in foreign areas, an *opinion* that impinges upon the authority and rights of LCMS congregations to fulfill their official duties and reason for existence, that is, to extend the Gospel to the ends of the earth so that the loving actions and will of the triune God might be made known among the nations of the earth; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.8.3 appears to contradict portions of Articles II, III, VII, and XIV of the Synod Constitution when it states that “upon the recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board shall serve as *the only sending agency* through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas” (Bylaw 3.8.3; emphasis added) *when judged* in light of the clear *testimony of Scripture* that the congregation possesses the

authority and right to call and send missionaries according to scriptural practice (Acts 13:1–3) and *two primary objectives* of the Synod which are (1) to strengthen, *and not to hinder or restrict* through the adoption of a bylaw, rule, or regulation, congregations in giving bold witness by word and deed and *extend that Gospel witness into all the world* and (2) to provide protection for congregations and church workers in the performance of their official duties and the maintenance of their rights as the members of the Synod, entrusted with making disciples of all nations through their evangelizing and edifying ministries to the ends of the earth; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in Convention amend the final paragraph of Bylaw 3.8.3 to read as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Upon recommendation of the Office of International Mission, the board Congregations shall serve as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod, including for the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas nationally and internationally, and the Office of International Mission serves as the national sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to foreign mission areas on behalf of the Synod.

and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention recognize, affirm, and protect the authority and right of LCMS congregations to serve as the Synod's *primary agency* for the calling and sending of pastors and missionaries locally and globally; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention recognize and affirm the rights of districts, RSOs, and LCMS mission agencies to call workers on behalf of the congregations they represent and serve; and be it further

Resolved, That the Board for National Mission and the Board for International Mission fulfill the purpose of the Synod as defined in Bylaw 1.1.1, as they “work in support of and on behalf of *congregations to assist them in carrying out their ministries as they seek to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, the members of His body, and the world which stands in need of the Word and the impact of His redeeming love*” (emphasis added); and be it finally

Resolved, That congregations communicate and coordinate with their circuits, districts, and the Board for International Missions when making missionary calls so that everything be done decently and in good order.

Board of Directors
New Jersey District

2-11

To Reaffirm Congregational Autonomy in the Support of International Missions

WHEREAS, Article VII of the LCMS Constitution clearly states that Synod is only advisory relative to the self-governance of member congregations; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has directed its congregations and auxiliary organizations to process their financial support of international missions through the Synod's national offices; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in its 2016 convention reaffirm the congregational prerogative of its member congregations to determine how they will support the Synod's or other international missions.

Redeemer
Mercer Island, WA

2-12

To Affirm Congregational Autonomy in Supporting International Missions

WHEREAS, The LCMS has directed congregations and auxiliary organizations to process all financial support for international missions through the LCMS headquarters; and

WHEREAS, Article VII of the LCMS Constitution clearly states that Synod is only an advisory body relative to the individual congregation's right of self-government; and

WHEREAS, Individual members and congregations of Synod relinquish none of their authority and autonomy in agreeing to walk together with other congregations of Synod to accomplish the work of the church which congregations cannot accomplish individually; and

WHEREAS, Individual congregations and members alone have the authority to determine whether any resolutions, directives, etc. of the Synod are in accordance with the Word of God or appear to be inexpedient as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned; therefore be it

Resolved, That this 2016 LCMS convention affirm the constitutional prerogative of individual LCMS member congregations EITHER to accept the advice of this directive of Synod and process their contributions through the LCMS Board for International Missions, if the congregation deems this method to be expedient; OR to exercise its autonomy and contribute directly to international mission projects.

Zion
Portland, OR

2-13

To Require Cause for Withdrawal or Release of Career Missionaries

WHEREAS, It is a solemn duty of our Synod to support our ordained and commissioned ministers who serve as career missionaries; and

WHEREAS, The Board for International Mission currently holds the right to call, appoint, assign, withdraw, and release missionaries, including ministers of religion—ordained or commissioned, upon recommendation of the Office of International Mission (Bylaw 3.8.3); and

WHEREAS, The Synod's bylaws do not currently mandate that the Office of International Mission must show cause before recommending the withdrawal or release of ministers of religion who serve as missionaries; and

WHEREAS, The current situation can discourage ministers of religion from being willing to become career missionaries; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District Pastoral Conference memorialize the Synod:

1. That the Synod in convention mandate that the Office of International Mission show cause for its recommendation to withdraw or release ordained or commissioned career missionaries.
2. That the Synod in convention prohibit the Board for International Mission from terminating the employment of ordained or commissioned career missionaries for no cause; and
3. That the Commission on Constitutional Matters present to the next convention of the Synod recommendations for how ordained and commissioned career missionaries may have the right to appeal the cause given for the termination of their employment as missionaries.

Minnesota South District Pastoral Conference; Eastern
Region Pastors Conference, English District

To Complete Charge of 2013 Res. 1-08 Giving Specific Attention to Concerns Related to CCM Decision 14-2724

WHEREAS, St. Paul encourages the church at Corinth that “all things should be done decently and in good order”; and

WHEREAS, An objective of the Synod is to “strengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend the Gospel witness into all the world” (Constitution, Art. III 2); and

WHEREAS, Article VII 1 recognizes, “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”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.8.3 charges the Board for International Mission with the development of policies that may include “safeguarding the rights of partner churches”; and

WHEREAS, The same Bylaw states that the Board for International Mission “shall serve as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign mission areas of the Synod, including the calling, appointing, assigning, withdrawing, and releasing of missionaries (ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) and other workers for the ministries in foreign areas”; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Res. 1-08, “To Work Together in Mission,” states: “*Resolved*, That the Synod, by the next convention, develop and provide a mission best-practices policy document for districts and congregations engaged in mission projects to assist them better to carry out their mission in their life together; and be it further *Resolved*, That these best practices include encouragement to districts and congregations to communicate their international mission activities to the Synod’s Director of Church Relations and Offices of National and International Mission for the purposes of healthy coordination and good stewardship”; and

WHEREAS, The Synod publication *Reporter* (March 2015) included the following summary of the January 30–31, 2015, Board for International Mission meeting and admission by its chairman, Rev. Bernhard Seter, of concerns regarding recent CCM decision (14-2724):

As the LCMS looks to better coordinate missionary work with partner church bodies and their national governments toward more safe, efficient and unified efforts, the board also looked at concerns stemming from the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) opinion circulated last year regarding the interpretation of the final paragraph of Synod Bylaw 3.8.3 per Synod’s 2013 *Handbook*, page 114, and its reference to the Board for International Mission as “the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the foreign areas of the Synod.” ... “The CCM bylaw opinion caused much discussion and some areas of concern,” said Seter. “We had the chance to [clarify] that we are looking for collaboration, communication, and deeper partnerships with mission societies and recognized service organizations (RSOs). The mission field is large and varied, and we can support each other and work together, if we keep the lines of communication open;

and

WHEREAS, Concerns have arisen regarding CCM decision 14-2724 as to the relationship of the Office and Board of International Mission with districts, congregations, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations (RSOs), and that this decision may restrict worldwide mission efforts and financial support of such mission efforts; therefore be it

Resolved, That this convention of the Missouri District direct the district president to encourage the Board for International Mission to

- a. complete the assignment from 2013 Res. 1-08;
- b. consult with Synod congregations, districts, auxiliaries, and RSOs that work internationally in the process of developing the best-practices policy document; and
- c. give consideration to Articles III 2 and VII 1 of the Constitution in developing its best-practices policy document;

and be it further

Resolved, That the Missouri District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to encourage the districts, congregations, auxiliaries, and RSOs to coordinate, collaborate, and communicate with the Office of International Mission for the sake of the coordination of efforts and good stewardship and out of concern for partner churches; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Missouri District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention to encourage the Office of International Mission to collaborate with districts, congregations, auxiliaries, and RSOs “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.”

Missouri District

2-15

To Change Funding Model of Our Missionaries

WHEREAS, The current model for funding LCMS missionaries requires them to raise their own salary and funding by visiting congregations and asking for money; and

WHEREAS, They cannot be deployed into the mission field until they reach a certain percentage of their overall funding; and

WHEREAS, When Christ sent out the 70 missionaries in Luke 10:1–8, He instructed them not to worry about how they would be provided for but to devote themselves to the work of the Gospel before them; and

Whereas, There is no other ministry in the Church that requires its ministers to beg for money in order to be supported; and

WHEREAS, This current system places an enormous burden on our missionaries, delays their deployment, and forces them to worry about money instead of focusing on the proclamation of the Gospel; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of Synod establish a task force to examine different methods of funding our missionaries that would remove the burden of raising their own funds from our missionaries; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force report its findings prior to the 2019 Synod convention and present at that convention a plan by the President’s Office to lessen the burden of fund-raising from our missionaries.

Eldora Circuit
Iowa District East

FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

3. Mercy

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R6, R7, R18, R54

OVERTURES

3-01

To Help Our Mercy Agencies Be Free to Be Faithful

Preamble

The founding fathers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod were drawn to American shores by the prospect of the free exercise of religion. Oppressed in their own country by the Prussian Union, they saw firsthand the damage to the preaching of the Gospel when church and state are confounded. Today we face that prospect once again.

The loss of freedom to exercise religion is not only a theoretical possibility; it has already happened in our midst. Both in Illinois and in Massachusetts, state laws forced our LCMS adoption agencies into an impossible dilemma. Unable to comply with the unjust command to place children into the harmful environment of same-sex homes, they were forced to cease operating altogether.

On the Federal level, the Affordable Care Act has put Concordia Plans in a very difficult position. Only a narrowly defined “grandfather clause” is keeping it from being forced to cover abortifacient drugs.

As President Harrison’s official statement of June 26, 2015, predicted, the Obergefell ruling has already unleashed a torrent of attacks on those who seek only “to obey God, rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Not only in the arena of marriage law are Christians being hounded to speak and act against their own consciences; we are even seeing a move to overturn numerous long-standing laws designed to exempt Christians from the abortion culture.

While, at present, pastors and houses of worship are generally exempt from both of these onslaughts, this alone is not satisfactory. We must also speak in defense of the individual Christian in our pews: the baker, the florist, the musician, the public school teacher, the county clerk, the nurse, the doctor, and a thousand other vocations where financial, career, and legal pressures are brought to bear on people in an effort to coerce words and actions contrary to the Word of God.

Also, between the individual and the Church itself, there are a host of institutions that we must and ought to defend: educational institutions from preschools to seminaries, church insurance agencies, charities, adoption agencies, Christian counseling agencies, and the list goes on and on.

We, the LCMS, recognize the myriad pressures that a godless society will bring to bear upon organizations both near and far from the Church’s mission; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS thank the numerous recognized service organizations that support the diaconal work of the Synod in various ways. And we encourage each to stand firm in confessing the whole counsel of God, being wise as serpents and gentle as doves; and be it further

Resolved, That we direct the Concordia University System to establish clear ethical standards for campus life that confess and encourage the sanctity of marriage, life, and family as a light that shines in a dark place. Such standards will naturally proscribe

cohabitation, sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, transgenderism, etc. (Rom. 1:21–32; Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 5:3–5; Col. 3:5); and be it further

Resolved, That we direct all LCMS entities to prioritize a bold and unambiguous witness to the sanctity of holy marriage and godly policies that attest to that witness, no matter what financial, institutional, or governmental pressures might be threatened to compromise that confession; and be it finally

Resolved, That we as individual stewards, and the LCMS as a whole, pledge ourselves to undertake to supply whatever financial costs may be imposed upon those institutions of the Synod that are penalized for speaking and living according to God’s Holy Word.

Board of Directors
Wyoming District

3-02

To Encourage Synod to Educate and Advocate for Persecuted Christians

WHEREAS, Paul reminds us in 1 Cor. 12:26, “If one part [of the Body of Christ] suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it”; and

WHEREAS, Ancient Christian populations in the region of the Middle East are suffering persecution of the most severe kind; and

WHEREAS, Many of these populations face extinction because of their faith; and

WHEREAS, Many men, women, and children have been brutally murdered, or driven from their homes, becoming refugees in their own homeland or interned in countries looking to a future place to live; and

WHEREAS, Many have been kidnapped from their families; therefore be it

Resolved, That pastors and congregations be encouraged to become “educated” about this issue in the Middle East and wherever persecution of Christians is known and taking place; and be it further

Resolved, That *The Lutheran Witness*, *Reporter*, *Lutherans Engage the World*, and other LCMS publications, blogs, and Internet sites be encouraged to become channels of information and direction as to specific ways to help channel funds and sympathy; and be it further

Resolved, That individual Lutherans, according to their conscience, be encouraged to contact their respective elected officials concerning the plight of Christian refugees; and be it finally

Resolved, That this convention take time to remember such concern in prayer, should this resolution be received with affirmation.

Southern District

3-03

To Oppose Use of Aborted Fetal Tissue in Vaccines

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures define human life as being present from the moment of conception (Ps. 139:13–14); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod strongly upholds the right to life for all unborn children; and

WHEREAS, Recent reports have been made public about the sale of aborted fetuses for research or incorporation into products and treatments made available to the public; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS maintains that fetal tissue harvested from an aborted fetus should not be used even for purposes which claim to be beneficial (Rom. 3:8); and

WHEREAS, Aborted human fetal protein is currently used in a number of different vaccines; and

WHEREAS, Forty-eight states currently allow a religious exemption to vaccinations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS call on the scientific and medical communities to discontinue the use of tissue from aborted children in all vaccines; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS recognize a right to religious exemption to individual members of the congregations of our Synod who wish to refuse vaccinations containing aborted fetal tissue on moral grounds.

Circuit 7, Texas District; Holy Shepherd, Haslet TX;
Victory in Christ, Newark, TX; Grace, Parish, TX; Circuit
10, Texas District

3-04

To Create Task Force for Study of In Vitro Fertilization

WHEREAS, God instituted marriage (Gen. 1–2); and

WHEREAS, He intended children to be born into families and raised by their father and mother (Ex. 20:12); and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture uses the term *conception* to mean the union of the male and female gametes (i.e., sperm and egg; Gen. 16:4); and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture shows that human life begins at conception (Ps. 139:13; Matt. 1:20; Luke 2:21); and

WHEREAS, In vitro fertilization (IVF), a procedure used by many people as a fertility treatment, fertilizes human eggs outside the mother's body, separating conception from coitus; and

WHEREAS, the collection of sperm for IVF requires either masturbation or coitus interruptus, further separating the creation of human beings from the God-given context of mutual bodily self-giving; and

WHEREAS, IVF does not heal the bodies of the barren husband or wife but increases a woman's risk of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS) and some cancers through the overstimulation of her ovaries in order to produce excess eggs, contrary to nature; and

WHEREAS, IVF increases the risk of major birth defects, motor abnormalities, mental disorders, hormonal abnormalities, and still-birth in children; and

WHEREAS, God forbids the taking of innocent human lives (Gen. 9:5–6; Ex. 20:13); and

WHEREAS, Embryos produced in IVF are being exposed to mortal danger outside of their mother's womb, with the vast majority of them dying during the process of cryopreservation (i.e., freezing); and

WHEREAS, Embryos produced in IVF are subject to being graded by their appearance for their viability; genetically tested for their sex, chromosomal abnormalities, and diseases; and killed for eugenic reasons; and

WHEREAS, Embryos produced in IVF may be cryopreserved in liquid nitrogen and, if part of a multiple pregnancy, aborted for the vitality of a perceived stronger brother or sister in the womb; and

WHEREAS, IVF procedures are, on average, only 30 percent successful in bringing about a live birth; and

WHEREAS, The high cost of IVF cycles provides a large financial incentive to overproduce embryos and cryopreserve some for future implantation, causing many of the embryos to die during the freezing process and leaving others vulnerable to be bought and sold as commodities to be gestated in any womb; and

WHEREAS, IVF clinics routinely cryopreserve and discard thousands of embryonic children each year*; and

WHEREAS, Thousands of these cryopreserved embryos are abandoned by their parents; and

WHEREAS, Participating in any IVF procedure at these clinics supports them as a whole, including their discarding and freezing of embryonic children; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of the Synod appoint a task force consisting of the chair of LCMS Life Ministries, a representative from Lutherans For Life, a representative from the CTCR, a representative from each of our Synod's seminaries, and other members of LCMS congregations who have expertise in medicine, ethics, or theology; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force study IVF and whether it is permissible; and be it finally

Resolved, That this task force present a report answering this question, to be considered and adopted by the 2019 LCMS convention.

Emmaus, St. Louis, MO; Good Shepherd, Sherman, IL

*An April 2002 survey by RAND Corp. showed approximately 400,000 embryos were being stored: http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9038/index1.html. A 2011 survey by the Social Science Research Center showed approximately 612,000 embryos were being stored: <https://www.nightlight.org/spotlight/embryo-adoption-census-report-registration/>. This demonstrates that an average of 23,500 embryos are being frozen each year.

3-05

To Commend Participation in 2017 LCMS Life Conference

WHEREAS, The Bible clearly states that the child in a mother's womb is a living human being (Jer. 1:5; Ps. 139:16; Is. 49:1, 5; Luke 1:41, 44); and

WHEREAS, Christians are called "to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves" (Prov. 31:8–9); and

WHEREAS, The Fifth Commandment, "You shall not murder," along with the Small Catechism's explanation "not to hurt or harm our neighbor, but help and support him in every physical need" direct us to celebrate life and educate ourselves in how we can help and support our neighbor; and

WHEREAS, 2010 Res. 6-02A called upon the LCMS Sanctity of Human Life Committee to convene a conference "that will provide encouragement to all LCMS members currently involved in elective and legislative processes and help them to be more vocal about pro-life issues, and that will equip and encourage more LCMS members to become involved in the governmental process of our country"; and

WHEREAS, LCMS Life Ministries has successfully conducted such conferences in 2013 and 2015 and is planning another conference for January 27–29, 2017; and

WHEREAS, This upcoming conference's schedule over a weekend will make it somewhat easier for lay participation but more challenging for broad participation among full-time church workers serving in parishes—for pastors in particular; and

WHEREAS, The fastest growing segment of those affirming in the public square God's gift of life are those of high school and college age; therefore be it

Resolved, That we, the Board of Directors of the Central Illinois District of the LCMS, thank LCMS Life Ministries and commend them for their past life conferences; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage each circuit of our district to have at least one pastor, one lay person, and one high-school- or college-age youth attend LCMS Life Conference 2017; and be it finally

Resolved, That we memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to adopt the above resolution.

Board of Directors
Central Illinois District

3-06

To Create Task Force for Study of Issues Relating to Procreation, Fertility, and Care for Unborn Within the Christian Family

WHEREAS, LCMS Life and Health Ministries are committed to upholding the sanctity of life and protecting the most vulnerable neighbors in body and spirit; and

WHEREAS, The Christian family is the building block of the church; and

WHEREAS, Children are a blessing from the Lord; and

WHEREAS, Procreation is always a gift given according to the will of God; and

WHEREAS, A Christian husband and wife in our current twenty-first century context may be confronted with a multiplicity of choices when making decisions regarding procreation, fertility, and care of the unborn (e.g. contraception, procreative alternatives, reproductive assistance, perhaps even abortion, and others); and

WHEREAS, At the least, a partial causal factor of this multiplicity of choices has been continually new and rapidly emerging developments in science and technology; and

WHEREAS, A Christian husband and wife who faithfully desire to submit to God's will and thoroughly evaluate these choices from the perspective of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions may nevertheless be challenged and bewildered by the complexity of the resultant ethical decisions that they face; and

WHEREAS, LCMS Life Ministry has recently hosted a series of meetings to discuss such issues among qualified theologians, ethicists, physicians, and lay persons; and

WHEREAS, Recently, there have emerged as many or more sincere questions than unequivocal answers regarding the Christian use of contraception, in vitro fertilization (IVF), and other reproductive technologies; and

WHEREAS, There is concern for the embryos that often remain in a frozen state following an IVF procedure; and

WHEREAS, Questions remain regarding the ethical and theological permissibility of embryo adoption; and

WHEREAS, Some Christian couples may even be advised by their physician to consider abortion as a life-saving measure for the mother; and

WHEREAS, Over past years various LCMS documents including CTCR reports, such as *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective* (1981), *Abortion in Perspective* (1984), *Christians and Procreative Choices: How Do God's Chosen Choose?* (1994), *Christian Faith and Human Beginnings: Christian Care and Pre-Implantation Human Life* (2005) have served in varying degrees of depth and breadth to address some of the aforementioned issues in whole or in part; and

WHEREAS, Many of these aforementioned documents are now decades old, and the applicable science and technologies addressed therein have greatly, rapidly, and considerably changed, even as other new science and technologies have emerged in the same intervening time period, even in the last few years; and

WHEREAS, Out of love for the neighbor, the church must ever look afresh at such critical issues and responsibly address them on the basis of God's Word; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of the Synod appoint a task force within the Office of National Mission consisting of the Director of LCMS Life and Health Ministries, and representatives from Lutherans for Life, the CTCR, each of the Synod's seminaries, and rostered LCMS church workers or lay members of LCMS congregations who

are respected for their expertise in the fields of medicine, procreative science, theology, ethics, and the like; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force take up the study of issues surrounding fertility and procreation, including but not limited to: abortion in rare or extreme circumstances, the gift of procreation, contraception, reproductive technologies, in vitro fertilization, embryo adoption, and adoption; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force gather and arrange points for consideration, coordinate discussion, and identify actions leading to the production of appropriate LCMS responses to these issues (reports, study documents, essays, other media and the like) with the CTCR and/or other appropriate LCMS entities; and be it finally

Resolved, That this task force continue this aforementioned work of leadership, facilitation, and coordination, and summarize its activities in a report to be completed by December 31, 2018, along with accompanying recommendations in the form of appropriate overtures to the Synod's 2019 national convention.

Board for National Mission

3-07

To Commend Concordia Portland for Its 3 to PhD® Initiative

WHEREAS, Jesus said to His disciples, "Let the little children come unto Me" (Matt. 19:14), and Concordia University, Portland, has a unique opportunity to fulfill this very command by virtue of its location in one of Portland's most underserved and vulnerable communities; and

WHEREAS, Concordia University has partnered with Faubion school (PK-8 public, Title I school) as a place for Concordia's teacher education students, business students, athletes, and nursing students to aid Faubion students and their families, gaining valuable hands-on experience for their own future; and

WHEREAS, Concordia University is partnering with Portland public schools in an innovative, community-wide initiative called "3 to PhD®," focused on building a safer, healthier, and more educated community and anchored by a decades-long partnership between Concordia University and Faubion; and

WHEREAS, Concordia University and Portland public schools have agreed together to build a one-of-a-kind school that will house both Faubion school and Concordia's College of Education, bringing together faculty and students from both institutions under one roof, featuring also a community and campus wellness space, early childhood center, and a state-of-the-art learning environment, benefitting both Faubion and Concordia students and faculty; and

WHEREAS, This partnership allows Concordia to fulfill its mission of being a Lutheran university, preparing leaders for the transformation of society, by starting with the community immediately surrounding the university; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention commend Concordia University, Portland, for its innovative outreach into its community through 3 to PhD® as being an example of mercy to its neighbors; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention encourage Concordia University, Portland, to continue to make the most of this God-given opportunity to reach out with mercy in its life together within the community in which God has placed them.

Board of Directors
Northwest District

3-08

To Request Thrivent Financial for Lutherans to Open Up Choice Dollars to Lutherans For Life

WHEREAS, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans was formed by the merger of Aid Association for Lutherans and Lutheran Brotherhood, two fraternal organizations established by Lutherans for Lutherans with Lutheran values; and

WHEREAS, Lutherans believe that life is created by God; and

WHEREAS, Lutherans For Life is a recognized service organization (RSO) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) that promotes this understanding; and

WHEREAS, Thrivent previously allowed Choice Dollars to be directed to Lutherans For Life; and

WHEREAS, Thrivent recently discontinued this option; and

WHEREAS, Lutherans For Life benefited from those Choice Dollars that were directed to their ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod make a special request of Thrivent to once again allow Lutherans For Life to be an option for Choice Dollars giving; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod be authorized to open up discussion with Thrivent executives to accomplish this directive.

Circuit 8
Kansas District

3-09

To Add a Synod Prison and Jail Ministry Coordinator

WHEREAS, The importance of ministering to those who are in prison is stressed by our Lord Jesus, as He says in Matthew 25:36, “I was in prison and you visited Me,” and by the example of the Early Church, as reflected in Hebrews 10:24, “For you had compassion for those who were in prison”; and

WHEREAS, The Southern Illinois District has been a pioneer in a variety of jail, prison, mental-health-facility, and juvenile-facility ministries on a weekly basis through the overview of prison ministry

coordinators established after the retirement of Rev. Maurice Alms in 2007; and

WHEREAS, The 2013 LCMS convention adopted Res. 1-13A, “To Designate District Coordinators for Prison and Jail Ministry,” and resolved, in part, that “the LCMS gathered in convention agree together to have a prison and jail ministry coordinator in each of our 35 districts, either volunteer or compensated, for the purpose of researching opportunities, training, providing guidelines, equipping congregations, and networking for prison and jail ministry”; and

WHEREAS, Preparation is being made for a synodwide Prison & Jail Ministry Conference in April 2016, which will again involve the use of Southern Illinois District prison ministry coordinators and the SID Task Force on Prison Ministry; and

WHEREAS, Prison and jail ministry addresses God’s Word not only to prisoners but also to “returning citizens,” their families, prison staff, and victims of crime; and prison ministry directly effects more and more of our congregations and church members; and

WHEREAS, Many of our districts are seeking to be faithful to our Lord’s mandate to visit those in prison by their support of prison ministry, recognizing that crime has touched virtually every congregation of the Synod by way of membership, relatives, or friends experiencing the crisis of imprisonment; and

WHEREAS, Prison and jail ministry offers many opportunities to share the Gospel with persons who do not yet know Jesus Christ, as the Bible states that Jesus said, “As you did it to the least of these, you did it unto Me”; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has a goal of showing mercy for unreached and uncommitted peoples along with the Gospel; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention direct the Office of National Mission to include in its personnel a Synod Prison and Jail Ministry Coordinator to work with the various districts and their prison ministry coordinator for the purpose of networking, supporting, and enabling prison ministry among the districts and congregations of the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention give thanks to God for those within our Synod who continue to work in the areas of prison and jail ministry to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who are incarcerated, their families, “returning citizens,” and victims of crime.

Southern Illinois District

FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

4. Life Together

REPORTS

**R1, R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R2.3, R3, R6, R7, R11, R12, R14,
R19–R53, R54, R55, R56, R57, R58, R59**

OVERTURES

4-01

To Foster Spirit of Loving Discussion among Church Workers

WHEREAS, As disciples of Christ we are called to speak the truth in love and to build one another up; and

WHEREAS, The art of discussion to respond to the needs of a changed, hurting world is vital to our witness and faith; and

WHEREAS, We have an opportunity as a church body to give witness to Jesus as we debate and discuss these issues; therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod encourage its congregations and church workers to have open and loving discussions about all issues within society that seek outcomes that can be a beacon of hope for a lost world.

Board of Directors, Southeastern District; Board of
Directors, Florida-Georgia District

4-02

To Celebrate 175 Years of Combined Ministry and Service of LWML and ILLL

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) is celebrating 75 years of ministry and service to the church (1942–2017); and

WHEREAS, The International Lutheran Laymen's League (ILLL) is celebrating 100 years of ministry and service to the church (1917–2017); and

WHEREAS, The auxiliaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the LWML and the ILLL, exist as arms of the Synod, with the primary function of aiding the Synod specifically in programs that extend the ministry and mission of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The mission of the LWML is to assist each woman of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in affirming her relationship with the Triune God so that she is enabled to use her gifts in ministry to the people of the world; and

WHEREAS, The mission of the ILLL is “Bringing Christ to the Nations – and the Nations to the Church”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention give thanks for the lay members of the LWML and ILLL; And be it further

Resolved, That the convention congratulate and commend the LWML and ILLL for their 175 years of combined ministry to the church; and be it finally

Resolved, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention stand and sing the Common Doxology with all glory to God in praise and anticipation of LWML and ILLL future ministry initiatives.

International Lutheran Laymen's League
Philip Krauss II, *Chairman*
Lutheran Women's Missionary League
Patti Ross, *President*

4-03

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Review and report on the original purpose and intent of the RSO program and its predecessors;
- Determine the needs of and benefits to the Synod with respect to the RSO program and identify the best model for the Synod to engage with organizations which foster the mission and ministry of the church and who engage in programs that are in harmony with the programs of the Synod;
- Recommend changes to the RSO program, or the elimination of the program, or replacement of the current RSO program with a new relationship model that provides benefit to the Synod and the social service agency, or develop and recommend other solutions;
- Recommend appropriate changes to the LCMS Bylaws, as needed; and
- Ensure that all recommendations maintain the importance of agencies that are recognized by the LCMS, foster the mission and min-

istry of the church, engage in program activity that is in harmony with programs of the Synod, and respect and not act contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod.

And be it further

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

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

LCMS Board of Directors

4-04

To Recommend 2016–2019 Synod Triennial Emphasis

WHEREAS, The current triennial emphasis of Witness, Mercy, and Life Together has served the Synod well and blessed congregations with a richer understanding of the nature and mission of the church of Christ; and

WHEREAS, LCMS Bylaw 4.2.1 (d) directs the Wyoming District convention to “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 Means of Grace, which are the Gospel delivered in Word, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and Absolution, are given for the life of the world, so that all who receive these divine gifts in true faith have the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation; and

WHEREAS, The delivered Gospel is despised or rejected by many today because it is obscured or opposed by a moral decay that despises authority, human life, marriage, and the common goods that belong to these gifts from God; and

WHEREAS, The church today must both speak out and pray for the governmental and societal defense of natural law, traditional marriage and family, human life from beginning to end, the historic value of human dignity, propositional truth, and other such embattled issues of truth and morality, “that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Tim. 2:2); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS is called by her Lord to serve this mission, not only in the United States but in and to all nations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District convention recommend to the Synod President that the LCMS triennial emphasis 2016–2019 be “Living the Gospel in the World”; and be it further

Resolved, That this emphasis include the proclamation, catechesis, and celebration of God’s Word, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and Absolution as the Means of Grace and the Marks of the Church, where God is present and at work to justify sinners in Christ and to produce the fruits of faith in the lives of Christians; and be it further

Resolved, That this emphasis address the challenges faced by the church within its congregations in faithfully delivering these Gospel means in its preaching, teaching, catechesis, liturgy, and song; in maintaining closed Communion, in welcoming visitors, in educating the young, in promoting and supporting Lutheran education, etc.; and be it finally

Resolved, That this emphasis be employed to further equip and enrich the pastors and congregations of Synod, her missions, and her sister churches in defending and promoting the biblically faithful aspects of our traditions and culture in morality, natural and written law, education, marriage and family, human life and dignity, literature and the cultural arts, and every worthy area of human labor and creativity.

Wyoming District

4-05

To Recommend Mission and Ministry Emphasis for Next Triennium: Reconciliation, Harmony, and Unity

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus directs His disciples to strive for reconciliation with fellow believers (Matt. 5 and 18), as does also St. Paul (1 Thess. 5); and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture both enjoins us to live in harmony with one another and, as far it depends on us, to live peaceably with all (Rom. 12); and

WHEREAS, The Word of God calls us to walk in a manner matching our calling as God’s people, “being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4); and

WHEREAS, Our commitment together as member congregations and members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is to strive to walk together, with the Word of God our only norm and guide for doctrine and practice; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention adopt for the 2016–2019 triennium the mission and ministry emphasis “Reconciliation, Harmony, and Unity.”

Southern Illinois District

4-06

To Make Children and Families a Triennial Priority and Focus

WHEREAS, Our Lord has asked us to share our faith with the children: “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut. 6:5–7); and

WHEREAS, Every generation is blessed with the grace of Christ Jesus, we are commanded to teach the next generation: “We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, His power, and the wonders He has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children” (Ps. 78:4–5); and

WHEREAS, God has promised that His Word will be effective in convicting of sin and all types of training in righteousness. This is most certainly true with children. “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Prov. 22:6); and

WHEREAS, God meets each of us, wherever we are, as sinners. He calls us with the grace of the Gospel to grow as the people of God. We as a church body need to meet people and children where they are. “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4); and

WHEREAS, When Jesus welcomed little children, and the disciples mistakenly thought Jesus had more important things to do, Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt. 19:14); therefore be it

Resolved, That the SELC District, in the next three years, make a special emphasis on youth and family ministry, sharing the Gospel of Christ with the next generation and working to strengthen families in their faith; and be it further

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod make children and families a priority and focus during the next triennium.

SELC District

4-07

To Engage Communities with the Gospel by Serving Needs of People

WHEREAS, The LCMS has invited congregations to submit ideas for mission and ministry to be emphasized in the next triennium; and

WHEREAS, The encouragement has been given that this should be a grassroots effort—from congregations to the circuit to the district and then to the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Congregations in Nebraska have seen the importance of building relationships and serving the people in their communities so the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be shared; and

WHEREAS, The congregations of the Falls City Circuit at their circuit convocation have approved this suggestion for a mission and ministry emphasis; therefore be it

Resolved, That, according to Synod Bylaw 4.2.1 (d), the Nebraska District in convention submit to the 2016 LCMS convention a proposed mission and ministry emphasis of engaging communities by building relationships through serving the needs of people so the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be shared; and be it further

Resolved, That Nebraska District congregations engaging in this mission be encouraged to share their ministry ideas with other congregations in their circuits and the Nebraska District.

Nebraska District

4-08

To Commend to Synod Priorities for National Mission and Ministry Emphases

WHEREAS, Bylaw 4.2.1 (d) directs that the “district convention shall, through delegate vote, forward to the national convention a list of two or three triennial mission and ministry emphases for consideration by the national convention”; and

WHEREAS, The delegates to the 2015 Southeastern District Convention have selected the top three mission and ministry priorities from among those previously identified by circuit and congregational representatives in preconvention meetings throughout the district; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Directors of the Southeastern District hereby forward the following three mission and ministry priorities to the Synod on behalf of the district in convention for consideration in developing national priorities for mission and ministry:

1. Connecting the unchurched with Jesus (Witness)
2. Lay missionary leadership development (Life Together)
3. Renewal/revitalization of existing ministries (Life Together)

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

4-09

To Suggest Synod Priorities for Triennial Planning Process

WHEREAS, LCMS Bylaw 5.3.1 (b) states: “Among the functions which the circuit forum may perform are the following: ... (5) To serve as a setting to review and evaluate programs, plans, and long-range directions of the district and the Synod and thus participate in the triennial process of suggesting, developing, and attaining the Synod’s priorities and goals”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 5.3.4 states: “The circuit forum may also participate in the triennial process of suggesting, developing, and attaining the Synod’s priorities and goals”; and

WHEREAS, The Minnesota North District received overtures from many circuits suggesting many possible priorities; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota North District meeting in convention memorialize the Synod, asking it to consider the following as priorities:

- Visitation throughout the Synod, including individual congregation members, ordained and commissioned ministers, other church workers, congregations, schools, circuits, districts, and the officers and agencies of Synod, using “Witness, Mercy, Life Together” as a unifying theme
- Ongoing support, care, and well-being of all church workers of the Synod
- Lutheran education at every level—pre-K, elementary, high school, university, and seminary
- Lutheran presence and policy in the public square and accompanying defense of proper religious freedoms
- Lutheran mission, particularly in context of the challenges posed by contemporary postmodern culture
- Establishment and communication of a distinctive worldwide Lutheran identity in view of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation
- Retention of our young people in worship, the life of the church, etc.
- Outreach to immigrant populations, particularly Hispanics and Muslims from various countries
- Continued support of Lutheran church bodies around the world
- Continued use of technology, social media, etc., particularly in outreach to young people
- Unity in doctrine and practice
- Encouragement of congregations in rural and small-town ministry to see and make use of opportunities for outreach within their communities
- Increased financial support of our seminaries
- Encouragement to congregations to call chaplains and missionaries on candidate status

Minnesota North District

4-10

To Designate Mission and Ministry Emphases for Consideration by 2016 Convention

WHEREAS, Bylaw 4.2.1 (d) states: “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, With regard to *mission* emphasis, the people in our congregations have the best news that could possibly be shared—that Jesus Christ is our Savior; and

WHEREAS, Our people may feel timid about sharing Christ through everyday contacts; and

WHEREAS, There is a continuing need for equipping God's saints to share their faith in the context of their various vocations and everyday relationships; and

WHEREAS, With regard to *ministry* emphasis, the Synod has a well-defined process of dispute resolution (Bylaw section 1.10), with each district of the Synod having four reconcilers appointed by the district's board of directors to six-year terms (Bylaws 1.10.10 and 1.10.10.1); and

WHEREAS, These reconcilers are called on to assist in informal and formal reconciliation efforts involving (1) members of the Synod, (2) the Synod itself, (3) a district or an organization owned and controlled by the Synod, (4) persons involved in excommunication, or (5) lay members of congregations of the Synod holding positions with the Synod itself or with districts or other organizations owned and controlled by the Synod (Bylaw 1.10.2); and

WHEREAS, The training of the reconcilers includes the use of resources from Ambassadors of Reconciliation™, a recognized service organization (RSO) of the LCMS, a ministry that makes its resources available to the public; and

WHEREAS, The use of Ambassadors of Reconciliation™ Bible studies and other resources by congregations and schools of the Synod, and the availability of the district reconcilers to lead studies and training in biblical peacemaking will serve to help God's people appreciate the gift of reconciliation with God that is theirs in Christ (Rom. 5:10–11; 2 Cor. 5:18–19) and will improve their service as ambassadors of Christ and peacemakers in daily life (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20); therefore be it

Resolved, That the South Dakota District encourage our Synod to continue to develop and make available resources that will assist our professional church workers and laity in their personal witness of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations, schools, and other entities of the Synod be informed by district officials of the ministry of Ambassadors of Reconciliation™ and its resources; and be it finally

Resolved, That districts offer their reconcilers to congregations and schools as trainers and teachers in biblical peacemaking.

South Dakota District

4-11

To Forward Priorities to Synod for Its Consideration

Resolved, That the 2015 Southern District convention forward the following priorities to the Synod for its consideration:

- Work toward the elimination of poverty and hunger within the United States
- Increase and improve multicultural relations within the LCMS church body
- Strengthen and support Black/African-American ministry efforts
- Actively engage in keeping Concordia College Alabama viable as an LCMS mission
- Support Dr. Rosa J. Young's legacy and the development of Rosa J. Young academies

Southern District

4-12

To Commemorate the 75th Anniversary of *The Lutheran Hymnal*

WHEREAS, This year 2016 marks the 75th anniversary of the publication of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, which was issued in 1941 by the Intersynodical Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics for the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America; and

WHEREAS, *The Lutheran Hymnal* stands as a reminder and is one of the finest products of the cooperative relationship that united the principal confessional Lutheran church bodies in the United States in the old Synodical Conference; and

WHEREAS, During the four decades in which *The Lutheran Hymnal* served the Synod as its primary hymnal, the Synod experienced unprecedented numerical growth, doubling its size while witnessing the tremendous expansion of its schools and institutions of higher education; and

WHEREAS, The enduring character of *The Lutheran Hymnal* is evidenced by its continued use to the present day and by the incorporation of its beloved texts in *Lutheran Service Book*; and

WHEREAS, New technologies make it possible to keep in print and/or provide for free download the numerous resources created in connection with the publication of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, which remain invaluable for purposes of reference, scholarship, and worship; and

WHEREAS, It is meet and right that the Synod in convention give thanks to God for the liturgical and hymnological treasures of the church contained in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, and ensure that the same are readily accessible today and to future generations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 Synod convention commemorate the 75th anniversary of *The Lutheran Hymnal* by giving thanks to God for the liturgical and hymnological treasures of the church contained therein; and be it further

Resolved, That Concordia Publishing House be directed to maintain the availability of *The Lutheran Hymnal* and related resources, including but not limited to the organists' editions, *The Music for the Liturgy*, the *Agenda*, the *Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal*, the *Concordance to the Lutheran Hymnal*, and *The Lutheran Hymnal Sight Saving Edition*, by keeping them in print, by keeping them available for publication on demand at reasonable rates, and/or by making .pdf downloads available *gratis*, in such manner as shall to it seem best, and by including *The Lutheran Hymnal* materials in *Lutheran Service Builder*.

St. Paul
Brookfield, IL

4-13

To Provide for Doctrinal Review of Non-Synod- Approved Worship and Catechetical Materials

WHEREAS, There is a wide diversity in the worship and catechetical materials used by the congregations of the Synod, and there is no provision for the doctrinal review of such materials that are non-Synod approved; therefore be it

Resolved, That present Constitution Article VI 4 be amended by adding the following paragraph at the end of present point 4:

PROPOSED WORDING

...

- 4 Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school. The doctrinal purity of official agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms shall be determined by the national con-

vention of the Synod. The doctrinal purity of non-Synod-approved worship and catechetical materials shall be decided by the individual congregations using such materials. Any communicant member in good standing of a Synod congregation may challenge the doctrinal purity of non-Synod-approved worship or catechetical materials, whether those materials are used by his or her own congregation, by another congregation of the Synod, or by an entity or agency of the Synod. Such challenge shall be in the form of a written appeal to the Commission on Doctrinal Review, which shall issue its ruling to all relevant parties in a timely manner.

Trinity
Evansville, IN

4-14

To Preserve Use of Historic Lutheran Liturgy and Hymns

WHEREAS, There is a wide diversity in the worship materials used by the congregations of the Synod, and in many cases the historic Lutheran liturgy and hymns have been completely neglected in regular use; therefore be it

Resolved, That present Constitution Article VI be amended to insert the following point between present points 4 and 5 as a new point:

PROPOSED WORDING

Article VI Conditions of Membership

...

4. Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school.
5. Congregations and pastors shall exercise their responsibility for training children, youth, and inexperienced adults in the Lutheran faith by making regular—but not necessarily exclusive—use of (1) the historic Lutheran liturgy for Communion services; and (2) the hymns which have been published in the official hymnbooks of the Synod. Although the order of the elements in the historic Lutheran liturgy may be varied, the following elements shall be retained in such regular use in order to demonstrate a congregation’s unity with the Ancient Church and the Synod: (1) the Kyrie; (2) either the Gloria in Excelsis or “This Is the Feast”; (3) the Lessons; (4) one of the three ancient, ecumenical Creeds; (5) the Sermon; (6) the Sanctus; (7) the Lord’s Prayer; (8) the Words of Institution; (9) the Agnus Dei; and (10) the Distribution of the Body and Blood of our Lord. No particular musical setting or instrument is hereby recommended. Everything in Lutheran worship is to be done reverentially and faithfully, and in a manner which best serves good order, evangelical decorum, Christian discipline, and the edification of the church (FC SD X, 7 and 9).
6. A congregation shall be received . . .

Trinity
Evansville, IN

4-15

To Call for Official Evaluation of Worship Practice and Synodwide Visitation

WHEREAS, God’s Holy Scripture proclaims very clearly that there is orthodox worship and, as a matter of course, heterodox worship at John 4:19–24: “The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.’ Jesus

said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the *true* worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him *must* worship in spirit and truth.’” (NKJV, emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, God’s Holy Scripture also proclaims very clearly the entire plan of salvation (Gen. 1:31; 1:27; Lev. 19:1–2; Eph. 4:24; Gen. 2:16–17; 3:1–7; James 1:13–15; 1 John 3:8; Gen. 3:8, 9–12; Rom. 3:10–18, 22–23, 19–20; John 3:14–18; Rom. 5:8–11; Eph. 2:8–10; Rom. 4:16; Gen. 3:15; John 1:12–13; 6:44; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:17; 11:6; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:4–5; Titus 3:4–7; Heb. 4:12; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:22–23) and through His doctrinal truth He not only reveals His theology of the cross but also clearly establishes boundaries between orthodox worship (“in spirit and truth”) and heterodox worship (that which is practiced either not “in spirit” nor “truth,” or both), for just as He brings us to pray in the First Petition of the Lord’s Prayer that His doctrinal truth should be taught in its truth and purity, He thus brings us to desire orthodoxy for the hallowing of His name among us; and

WHEREAS, All worship should be evaluated so as to confirm that it is orthodox, thus supporting God’s theology of the cross—namely, utilizing (and fostering) God’s Law and Gospel in order to create and sustain repentance and belief (also known as the dying and rising of believers through Christ crucified and risen); and

WHEREAS, All worship should be evaluated so as to also confirm that it isn’t heterodox, thus supporting the theology of glory—namely, utilizing (and fostering) Arminian theology (or any other false theology) along with “revivalistic” tactics which aim excitement toward the base, natural will of man (the old man), just as Charles Finney (an Arminian) stated:

God has found it necessary to take advantage of the excitability there is in mankind, to produce powerful excitements among them, before He can lead them to obey.

and

WHEREAS, The practice of heterodox worship is a serious attack on the truth and proper teaching of God’s Word and His plan of salvation (specifically His theology of the cross); and

WHEREAS, Heterodox worship undoubtedly conveys a theology (namely, Arminian) which teaches believers (and potential believers) to trust their excitement, experience, feelings, or emotions generated by “revivalistic” tactics, thus replacing true repentant faith in the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, Both orthodox and heterodox worship can be evaluated according to the components that make up their practice—namely, to see whether those components either aim to kill through God’s Law and make alive through God’s Gospel (orthodoxy) or aim to “excite” and bring the “experience,” “feelings,” or “emotions” to be the most important focus, thus replacing repentant faith in the Gospel (heterodoxy); and

WHEREAS, Not doing anything about worship practice that conveys Arminian theology (or any other false theology) does not hallow God’s name but profanes His name among us and allows the surrendering of our neighbor’s souls to a misunderstanding of God’s Holy Scriptures; and

WHEREAS, The Preface to the Small Catechism discloses how Martin Luther himself carried out visitations upon the pastors and/or congregations and discovered that corrections needed to take place (inevitably leading to the creation of the Small and Large Catechisms), thus marking visitations as a very important task that needs to take

place in order to (by the grace of God) aid the church in equipping the saints, staying off error, and sustaining God's truth; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention determine to devise an "Official Evaluation of Worship Practice" that identifies where there are heretical components within the different worship services used by LCMS pastors and/or congregations, aiming to keep worship practices of LCMS pastors and/or congregations true to God's Word (that is, orthodox), further guarding those believers (and the *potential* believers that may come about within them); and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 convention, in order to avoid the ongoing spread of false theology through heterodox worship practice, have the development of the "Official Evaluation of Worship Practice" be constructed by a committee of LCMS pastors who in no way currently utilize (or even endorse) heterodox worship practices that promote the false teaching of God's Word, utilizing (and fostering) Arminian theology (or any other false theology) along with "revivalistic" tactics which aim excitement toward the base, natural will of man (the old man); and be it further

Resolved, That the "Official Evaluation of Worship Practice" that is eventually created be reported to the 2019 LCMS convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2019 LCMS convention, upon adoption of the "Official Evaluation of Worship Practice," then direct each of her district presidents to put the official evaluation into use through the district president's visitation of every LCMS pastor and/or congregation within his district (with the obvious assistance of his circuit visitors); and be it further

Resolved, That the district presidents (through their circuit visitors), according to 2 Timothy 4:2, correct and encourage (and if need be admonish) all pastors and/or congregations that are in error concerning heterodox worship practice that falsely conveys God's Word, utilizing (and fostering) Arminian theology (or any other false theology) along with "revivalistic" tactics which aim excitement toward the base, natural will of man (the old man); and be it finally

Resolved, That (having been encouraged and admonished) those pastors and/or congregations who, sadly, refuse to correct their heterodox worship practice and, after futile admonition, remain impenitent, be expelled from the Synod, as God's Word exhorts in 1 Timothy 6:3-5.

Grace
San Mateo, CA

4-16

To Recognize and Commemorate 75th Anniversary of *The Lutheran Hymnal*

WHEREAS, The year 2016 marks the 75th anniversary of the publication of *The Lutheran Hymnal*; and

WHEREAS, *The Lutheran Hymnal* has faithfully served and continues to serve many confessional Lutheran congregations and ministries since its publication three-quarters of a century ago; therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention, by adopting this overture/resolution, formally recognize and commemorate the 75th anniversary of *The Lutheran Hymnal*.

Evangelical Trinity
Clinton, MA

4-17

To Again Publish in Luther's Small Catechism the Fourth Commandment's Divine Promise

WHEREAS, The Fourth Commandment recorded in Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 includes the divine promise "that your days may be long"; and

WHEREAS, The promise is not able to stand alone and is not discerning without the command; and

WHEREAS, Paul's quotation of the Fourth Commandment includes the promise as given by Moses, clearly stating, "This is the first commandment with a promise" (Ephesians 6:2); and

WHEREAS, While the Book of Concord of 1580 does not contain the promise, some later official publications of the Book of Concord do, namely the 1921 *Triglotta* (promise in square brackets) and the 2005 *Reader's Edition* (promise in pointed brackets); and

WHEREAS, Up until 1986, all copyrighted versions of Luther's Small Catechism published by Concordia Publishing House contained the divine promise within the Fourth Commandment; and

WHEREAS, In 1986, the promise associated with the Fourth Commandment was removed from Luther's Small Catechism; therefore be it

Resolved, That Luther's Small Catechism published by the LCMS once again contain the biblical divine promise associated with this commandment.

Oklahoma District

4-18

To Direct CPH to Place 1986 Catechism into Public Domain

WHEREAS, The text of Luther's Small Catechism is the primary teaching tool of the Lutheran Church; and

WHEREAS, The text is intended to be used in the home and church and to be spread abroad as freely as possible; and

WHEREAS, the Scriptures themselves encourage us to write the text of the catechism on our doors and walls (Deut. 6:6ff.; see Luther's Preface to the Large Catechism); and

WHEREAS, Wherever the catechism is read, studied, printed, sung, written, posted, repeated, and learned, the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of faith and love; and

WHEREAS, The congregations of the LCMS, out of love for one another and the unity of the Spirit, have a common translation of the Small Catechism (1986); and

WHEREAS, CPH claims copyright on the 1986 translation of Luther's Small Catechism and on that basis limits its distribution (e.g., on the Internet, church websites, catechism study books and worksheets, audio recordings, posters and artwork, etc.); therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention direct the Board of Directors of Concordia Publishing House to place the 1986 translation of Luther's Small Catechism into the public domain.

High Plains Circuit
Wyoming District

4-19

To Translate and Publish Book of Concord of 1580 (Concordia) into Russian Language

WHEREAS, Christ has given His mandate to make disciples of “all nations” by baptizing and teaching (Matt. 28:19); and

WHEREAS, Scripture tells us that gathered before the throne of God and before the Lamb is an uncountable multitude “from every nation, from all tribes and people and languages” (Rev. 7:9); and

WHEREAS, The 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther will be observed in 2017; and

WHEREAS, It is most appropriate that people from “all nations” join in the celebration of that anniversary, and that this celebration include the study of the writings contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 (i.e., the Lutheran Confessions); and

WHEREAS, The 2013 LCMS convention approved Res. 4-02 “To Endorse Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church” (SELC); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS is also a partner church with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia (ELCIR); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod strongly encourage our partner churches to hold regular, ongoing studies of all writings contained within the Book of Concord of 1580; and be it finally

Resolved, That Concordia Publishing House be requested to translate into Russian and publish the Book of Concord of 1580 (Concordia) for these partner churches.

Victory in Christ
Newark, TX

4-20

To Translate Book of Concord of 1580 (Concordia) into French Language

WHEREAS, Christ has given His mandate to make disciples of “all nations” by baptizing and teaching (Matt. 28:19); and

WHEREAS, Scripture tells us that gathered before the throne of God and before the Lamb is an uncountable multitude “from every nation, from all tribes and people and languages” (Rev. 7:9); and

WHEREAS, The 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther will be observed in 2017; and

WHEREAS, It is most appropriate that people from “all nations” join in the celebration of that anniversary, and that this celebration include the study of the writings contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 (i.e., the Lutheran Confessions); and

WHEREAS, The 2013 LCMS convention approved Res. 4-03 “To Recognize Lutheran Church of Togo as an Independent, Self-Governing Partner Church; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS is also a partner church with the Evangelical Lutheran Church—Synod of France (EEL-SF), the Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti (ELCH); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod strongly encourage our partner churches to hold regular, ongoing studies of all writings contained within the Book of Concord of 1580; and be it finally

Resolved, That Concordia Publishing House be requested to translate into French and publish the Book of Concord of 1580 (Concordia) for these partner churches.

Victory in Christ
Newark, TX

4-21

To Develop Social Media Agreement for Professional Church Workers

WHEREAS, The prevalence of social media in the twenty-first century has introduced a new blend of both private and public discourse; and

WHEREAS, Many professional church workers in the LCMS utilize social media; and

WHEREAS, We are called by the Gospel and enlightened with God’s gifts to be His witnesses in both private and public settings; and

WHEREAS, The Eighth Commandment (Ex. 20:16) commands us to “not give false testimony against your neighbor”; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther’s explanation of the Eighth Commandment in the Small Catechism exhorts us to “explain everything in the kindest way”; and

WHEREAS, The apostle Peter’s words in 1 Peter 3:15 instruct us to witness in both word and action “with gentleness and respect”; and

WHEREAS, Employers throughout the United States are developing systems to safeguard the integrity of their organizations through professional agreements with their workers regarding their personal and public use of social media; and

WHEREAS, As servant leaders, professional church workers are called to live as examples both for the Christian Church and for the secular world; and

WHEREAS, The public witness of the LCMS to the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ can be either helped or hindered by professional church workers’ use of social media; therefore be it

Resolved, That the president of the Indiana District, in coordination and cooperation with all appropriate commissions and task forces, review the social media policy for the Indiana District office to be modified for congregational use, to be completed by the end of 2015; and be it further

Resolved, That the president of the Indiana District equip all circuit visitors to utilize this agreement for the blessing of all professional church workers and the congregations they serve; and be it further

Resolved, That the president of the Indiana District address the issue of responsible use of social media with all professional church workers at their respective conferences in 2016; and be it finally

Resolved, That the 2015 Indiana District Convention memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to develop a comprehensive “Social Media Agreement for Professional Church Workers” to be studied and implemented throughout the LCMS.

Indiana District

4-22

To Publicly Call Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker to Repentance

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture warns, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15); and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture warns, “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. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve” (Rom. 16:17–18); and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture warns, “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they

will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (2 Tim. 4:3–4); and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture declares, “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 competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17); and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker has stated on his own blog, *Transverse Markings: One Theologian’s Notes* (<http://matthewlbe9ker.blogspot.com/2013/10/what-is-he-trying-to-accomplish.html>), that he has three goals for the LCMS, all of which are contrary to the Scriptures and the positions of Synod:

1. To encourage members within the Synod to think differently about two issues, namely (a) the Synod’s understanding of Scripture that insists that only qualified men may serve as pastor in the Synod; and (b) the Synod’s understanding of Scripture that requires one to interpret the creation accounts in Genesis to be literal, historical descriptions of what God did in the not-too-distant past over the course of six actual 24-hour days (“six-day creationism”);
2. To have the Synod change its position that restricts the office of pastor only to men;
3. To have the Synod reject “creationism” in favor of “a more robust doctrine of creation, one that sets forth a theological understanding that better accords with the language and genre of these Genesis texts and that better accords with what people today know to be true and valid about the natural history of our planet”; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker has filed dissent, yet continues to publicly teach and promote false doctrine including woman’s ordination, having published articles on his own blog and on Daystar, where he published an article titled “An Argument for Female Pastors and Theologians” in which he states: “There is no legitimate biblical or dogmatic rationale for why the LCMS should now prohibit women from serving as theologians and pastors in the church” (<http://thedaystarjournal.com/an-argument-for-womenpastors-and-theologians/>); and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker continues to publicly teach and promote false doctrine including by his participation, while vested, in the installation of Charlene Rachuy Cox at Valparaiso University; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker continues to teach and promote false doctrine publicly, including acceptance of homosexuality and homosexual marriage, he having written to such effect on his blog, *Transverse Markings: One Theologian’s Notes*, in an article/a post titled “Further Signs of LCMS Times”; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker continues to teach and promote false doctrine publicly, including promoting a figurative interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 by stating in his post, “The Scandal of the LMCS Mind”...“Scientific data about the reality of physical death in the animal and plant kingdoms prior to origin of human beings (e.g., fossils of animals that lived long before the origin of human beings) must lead those who interpret the Bible in light of scientific knowledge to restate the nature of God’s good creation prior to the advent of human sin (e.g., such a good creation must have included the reality of death prior to the existence of human beings) and the character of the historical origin of sin (e.g., the advent of sin is to be traced to the first hominids who disobeyed God’s will but not necessarily to their having eaten from a tree in an actual place called the Garden of Eden several thousand years ago”); and

WHEREAS, the LCMS Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) has ruled, “While the filing of dissent does not constitute a case for removal, the member is required to teach and practice in

accord with Synod’s stated confessional position during the dissent process. If the member fails to honor and uphold the stated confessional position of the Synod during the dissent process, the member becomes subject to disciplinary action due both to the violation of the doctrinal position of the Synod and the offense against the other members of the Synod created by such failure (Constitution Art. XIII 1). In such case it is incumbent upon the ecclesiastical supervisor of the member to exercise disciplinary action against the member who fails to teach and act within Synod’s stated confessional position, whether apart from or during the dissent process (Bylaws 2.14.4; 2.15.4; 2.16.4)” [Opinion 13-2694, June 13, 2014]; and

WHEREAS, the LCMS Constitution and Bylaws define the responsibilities of the LCMS President to include:

- (c) [the President] shall call up for review any action by an individual officer, executive, or agency that, in his view, may be in violation of the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod. [LCMS Bylaw 3.3.1.2 c.]; also
2. It is the President’s duty to see to it that all the aforementioned [officers, employees, individual districts, and district presidents of Synod] 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.
3. The President 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 in all the districts of the Synod. [LCMS Constitution, Article XI, B. Duties of the President]; and

WHEREAS, President Matt Harrison stated on the “Witness Mercy Life Together” blog: “When a public teacher on the roster of Synod can without consequence publicly advocate the ordination of women (even participate vested in the installation of an ELCA clergy person), homosexuality, the errancy of the Bible, the historical-critical method, open communion, communion with the Reformed, does not change its inability to call such a person to repentance and remove such a teacher where there is no repentance, then we are liars and our confession is meaningless. I do not want to belong to such a synod, much less lead it. I have no intention of walking away from my vocation. I shall rather use it and, by the grace of God, use all the energy I have to call this Synod to fidelity to correct this situation”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Indiana District in convention commend President Harrison in his diligence to uphold the teachings of Holy Scripture and also the Constitution and Bylaws of the LCMS: And be it further

Resolved, That the Indiana District encourage President Harrison to provide a full report to the Synod of this matter involving Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker; And be it further

Resolved, that the Indiana District request the Synod in convention publicly to call upon Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker to repent and recant, or remove him from the clergy roster of the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Indiana District encourage everyone throughout the Indiana District to pray fervently to the Lord of the Church that His Holy Spirit, working through the holy and inerrant Word of God, would lead Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker to repentance and to confess once again with us in doctrinal unity what we believe, teach, and confess.

Indiana District

4-23

To Settle Prof. Jeffrey Kloha Controversy

WHEREAS, A controversy has arisen concerning Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Prof. Jeffrey Kloha and a paper which he presented in Oberursel, Germany, titled "Inspiration, Authority, and a Plastic Text"; and

WHEREAS, The controversy has caused some to question openly and vocally whether our Synod's St. Louis seminary is once again teaching false doctrine to the young men who are studying to be future pastors within the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The souls of men and women may well be led astray and fall away from the one true and saving faith; and

WHEREAS, Prof. Kloha's use of a nonbiblical term "plastic text" suggests that a Christian layperson can never be certain that the Bible they have in their home is the true and complete inspired Word of God; and

WHEREAS, Prof. Kloha seems to indicate in his paper that the Bible the lay members of our Synod have next to their nightstands is filled with errors and mistakes, for in his paper Prof. Kloha states that "Elizabeth probably sang the Magnificat, not Mary," even though Luke 1:46 states that it was Mary; and

WHEREAS, Prof. Kloha states in his paper: "Who then decides? As always, the gathered, baptized, those who hear the voice of the Shepherd and follow where He leads. From a human perspective, it appears as if the church were the same as other voluntary social organizations; theologically we know that only those who have been called by the Gospel, enlightened with His gifts, made holy and kept in the one true faith are part of this social organization. The church decides, but the church has been and continues to be led by the Spirit into all truth as it hears ever again the Word." Yet this position is the position that the Roman Church holds to and was condemned for in the Lutheran Confessions. It is Scripture, not the church, which has the final say (*Sola Scriptura*) (AC XXVIII; Tappert, p. 91); therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention set aside time for Prof. Jeffrey Kloha to speak to the convention delegates about his view on Holy Scripture; and be it further

Resolved, That Prof. Kloha answer in an honest and truthful manner the following questions:

- 1) Did he in fact write that Elizabeth, not Mary, spoke the Magnificat, even though Luke 1:46 states clearly that it was Mary? Does he still hold to the position he wrote in his paper?
- 2) Is the Bible which the lay members of the LCMS have in their homes a reliable Bible, that as closely as possible represents the original autographs, and thus in truth the very Word of God?
- 3) Do the lay members have a reliable Bible whereby they can study and understand, or are they in need of a clergy member to tell them what to believe? In other words, do sheep have a reliable Bible whereby they can judge whether the shepherd they have is telling them true or false doctrine? The Preface to the Formula of Concord declares that the Scriptures are the authority by which "all teachers and writings must be judged." A plastic Bible does not seem to support the theology of the Book of Concord. If the Bible is "plastic: moldable, shapeable, changeable," how can lay members be sure their Bible is true and trustworthy? (*At this point President Harrison shall read the Brief Statement to the delegates.*)
- 4) The LCMS at its 1959 convention reaffirmed that the "Brief Statement" was the official position of the LCMS. Do you agree that the "Brief Statement" is a true and accurate understanding of the doctrines it discusses, and is this also your position, so that the *Brief Statement* position is your position?

and be it finally

Resolved, That after listening to Prof. Jeffrey Kloha answer the above questions, the delegates of the 2016 LCMS convention shall vote either to expel Prof. Kloha from membership in the LCMS or to approve of Prof. Kloha and lay to rest this controversy and bring a God-pleasing peace to the LCMS.

Salem
Taylorsville, NC

4-24

To Request Public Clarification of Kloha Paper

WHEREAS, The paper entitled "Text and Authority: Theological and Hermeneutical Reflections on a Plastic Text" (which was presented by the Rev. Prof. Jeffrey Kloha in Oberursel, Germany) states:

I want to make clear from the beginning that the confession of the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God given by the Spirit through the prophets and apostles and the only source and norm of faith and life is not in question; this is not what I am challenging in this essay. What I am challenging is the manner in which we account for the inspiration and authority of Scripture ("Text and Authority: Theological and Hermeneutical Reflections on a Plastic Text," Kloha, p. 8).

and

WHEREAS, That which was just stated from the Rev. Prof. Kloha's paper has the ability to be read in such a way as to conclude that he questions the inspiration and authority of Scripture; and

WHEREAS, The historical-critical method of dividing God's Holy Scripture is something to be very concerned about because it questions the inspiration and authority of God's Holy Scripture and causes serious doubt toward the doctrinal teachings contained within God's Holy Scripture (not meaning to imply that the Rev. Prof. Kloha actually holds to such a teaching, but that, in general, it's a serious concern of which to be circumspect); and

WHEREAS, If such a questioning of the inspiration and authority of God's Holy Scripture is held by the Rev. Prof. Jeffrey Kloha, then it is not out of place to be concerned that he may have taught (and is currently teaching) that very questioning of God's Holy Scripture to the seminary students of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO; and

WHEREAS, The Rev. Prof. Kloha's initial paper, entitled "Text and Authority: Theological and Hermeneutical Reflections on a Plastic Text," has caused serious concern to the conscience of many because, somehow, the entire paper was obtained and became a public document to be read by many (even if it was posted in copyright violation) via the Internet (<http://thebarebulb.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/text-and-authority.pdf>); and

WHEREAS, The Rev. Prof. Kloha, at a conference entitled "The Day of Exegetical Reflection," held at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, on May 8, 2014, gave a presentation of what is supposed to be the revised edition of his first paper which caused concern, a presentation that was made available on the Internet (<http://concordiatheology.org/2014/07/doer14/>), yet in the presentation (because of time constraints) he did not deliver all of the revised paper (for, at the very beginning of that presentation, after being thankful for the meetings regarding the serious concerns of his first paper, the Rev. Prof. Kloha, says, "The result has been, of course, a much longer paper. It's now about 36 pages. I won't read you 36 pages, I promise."); therefore, in watching the video presentation, one never knows exactly how much of his first paper was revised, because a full presentation did not take place; and

WHEREAS, The Rev. President Matthew Harrison eventually released the following statement on August 15, 2014:

“To the Regents of CSL: I am pleased to report to the regents that in the course of significant conversations between President Meyer, Jeff Kloha, Daniel Preus and myself, professor Kloha has graciously heard critique of his paper and made numerous changes and omissions to increase clarity and greatly decrease concern. We find no false teaching in the revised paper. And we are very thankful to President Meyer and Professor Kloha for the clarity and humility demonstrated during these past months.”

and

WHEREAS, The Rev. President Harrison’s statement confirms that the Rev. Prof. Kloha “made changes and omissions to increase clarity and greatly decrease concern,” further confirming that a full revised paper exists by saying, “We find no false teaching in the revised paper,” yet a full presentation (nor an actual paper) by the Rev. Prof. Kloha, revealing his full revisions, has yet to be officially released; therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention (for the sake of comforting conscience and ending all deliberation) kindly direct the Rev. Prof. Jefferey Kloha to make available to the public his fully revised paper in which he “made changes and omissions to increase clarity and greatly decrease concern” (with corrections revealed through highlighted added words and line-through removed words included within the revised paper) so that all those who have concerns can read what the Rev. Professor’s clarifications are, and, God willing, bring all concerns to not simply “decrease” but to be eliminated altogether.

Grace
San Mateo, CA

4-25

To Investigate Organization Named FiveTwo in Light of Synod Constitution Article II

WHEREAS, The organization known as FiveTwo has LCMS clergy in leadership positions; and

WHEREAS, More than one LCMS district has invited FiveTwo to speak at conferences and conventions; and

WHEREAS, The public practices and teachings of FiveTwo are at the very least confusing when considered with historic Lutheran teachings; therefore be it

Resolved, That a full investigation of the beliefs and practices of the organization FiveTwo be conducted by an appointed task force of the Synod President; and be it further

Resolved, That until such investigation is concluded a moratorium on the promotion or involvement of FiveTwo at districts of the Synod be in effect; and be it finally

Resolved, That the investigation either recommend the continued promotion and involvement of FiveTwo or forbid the organization to be used at districts of the Synod.

Our Savior
Cheyenne, WY

4-26

To Require Super-Majority Votes to Adopt Convention Resolutions

WHEREAS, The psalmist (Ps. 133:1) prays, “How good and pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity”; and

WHEREAS, The Spirit-breathed apostolic teaching (1 Cor. 1:10) exhorts “that all of you agree with one another, so that there may be

no divisions among you, and that you may be perfectly united in word and thought”; and

WHEREAS, Christ Jesus Himself prays that those who bear His name may be one as He and the Father are one (John 17:11); therefore be it

Resolved, That any resolution that lacks the support of three-fourths (75 percent) of the delegates voting shall be returned to the church for further study, conversation, and prayer.

Concordia
Kingsport, TN

4-27

To Form Task Force to Foster and Further Collaboration in Lutheran Ministry, Education, and Mission

Preamble

The Atlantic District continues to be in the forefront and serve as a model for the greater LCMS of collaboratively engaging an increasingly urban, pluralistic, and multicultural cultural milieu with the unchanging Gospel of hope in Jesus Christ. Given the diverse context and the financial concerns arising from the rise of secularism and religious non-affiliation (the so-called “nones”) in North American society, collaboration and cohesion in Lutheran (LCMS) ministry, education, and mission, as guided by the elected leadership of the entire Synod in the COP, will prove essential to the ongoing call of the church to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19).

WHEREAS, The Spirit has called us together by the Gospel and gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith (Small Catechism, explanation of the Third Article); and

WHEREAS, As one Body of Christ in many members (Rom. 12:4), we serve God and our neighbors in manifold ministries (LCMS congregations, schools, universities, institutions, etc.); and

WHEREAS, North American society continues to become increasingly secular and pluralistic, and the Synod’s ministries, churches, schools and universities, districts, and institutions of all kinds face daunting financial pressures and existential realities; and

WHEREAS, Collaboration is then needed in the Synod to address and promote best practices in authentically Lutheran ministry, mission, and education; therefore be it

Resolved, That in the midst of pluralism, secularism, and financial constraints, and as we are called by Christ to be one Body in many members, the Council of Presidents form a task force to address opportunities and propose strategies for establishing and maintaining increased collaboration among congregations, schools, seminaries, colleges and universities, and institutions of the Synod as together we engage the world with the Gospel of hope in Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That the proposed task force present its findings and recommendations on collaboration in ministry, education, and mission to the 2019 Synod convention.

Atlantic District

4-28

To Establish Task Force for Social Media Policy Development

WHEREAS, Our Lord has commanded His people to care for the reputations of all people, especially those who are fellow brothers and sisters in Christ (Matthew 18; Eighth Commandment); and

WHEREAS, Christian unity and harmony are important aspects of the Christian faith both in terms of practice and in terms of witness to the faith that we hold (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3, 13; John 17:2); and

WHEREAS, The invention and use of social media has established a new platform that has not been examined by our Synod in terms of appropriate and God-pleasing use; and

WHEREAS, Accusations of irresponsible use of social media by both individual and corporate members of Synod have been made in both public and private settings; and

WHEREAS, Good order should prevail over a perceived need to voice frustrations, anger, and other such emotions, so that sin and corrupting talk may be curbed (Eph. 4:25–32); and

WHEREAS, Inappropriate use of social media may result in unnecessary litigation between members of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 6:1–7), which brings dishonor and defeat to the people of God; therefore be it

Resolved, That all members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, both individual and corporate, be encouraged to use social media in a way that brings glory and honor to the triune God and that seeks to “outdo one another in showing honor” (Rom. 12:10) to fellow brothers and sisters in Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That a task force be established to create appropriate policies and suggestions around the use and misuse of social media by members of the Synod, both individual and corporate.

Board of Directors
Florida-Georgia District

4-29

To Call for Members with Confessions Contrary to That of the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions to Leave Synodical Union Voluntarily

WHEREAS, The organizing principle for a Synodical Union is its confession of faith (Constitution Art. II); and

WHEREAS, The first objective of the Synod reads:

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” (Constitution Art. III);

and

WHEREAS, The Synodical Union’s provision for dissent is not intended to provide a means for repeated attacks on the confession of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, There are members of the Synodical Union who continue to hold confessions contrary to that of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions (e.g., abortion, evolution as the origin of man, homosexual behavior, women’s ordination), despite consistent rejection at Synod conventions of those positions; and

WHEREAS, Holding a confession contrary to that of the Synodical Union while remaining in membership thereof creates unnecessary conflict and stress within the union and raises questions with regard to the integrity of the dissenter; therefore be it

Resolved, That for the sake of the unity of this confession and for their own integrity, the Montana District respectfully requests that those members who hold a confession contrary to that of the LCMS voluntarily resign their membership in the Synodical Union; and be it further

Resolved, That the Montana District in convention memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to adopt this resolution as its own.

Montana District

4-30

To Advance Unity of Doctrine and Practice in All Districts of the Synod

WHEREAS, “The district presidents shall, moreover, especially exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the ordained and commissioned ministers of their district and acquaint themselves with the religious conditions of the congregations of their district” (Constitution, Art. XII 7); and

WHEREAS, Such supervision is the primary means by which the key elements of the first objective of the Synod are carried out—namely, to “[c]onserve and promote the unity of the true faith ... and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy” (Constitution, Art. III 1); and

WHEREAS, The Montana district president’s report notes a concern for “effectively dealing with those publicly holding a position that is contrary to that of the Synod”; and

WHEREAS, Several district conventions have already forwarded overtures expressing grave concern with how our “united defense against schism, sectarianism, ... and heresy” is being effected in at least some of the Synod’s districts through their respective district presidents; and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws emphasize in setting out the purpose for regular Council of Presidents meetings “opportunity for the President of the Synod to advise and counsel his representatives in the regions and districts and for the regional vice-presidents and district presidents in turn to give counsel to the President” and “to provide opportunity for the presidents of the districts and the Praesidium of the Synod to counsel with one another on matters regarding the doctrine and administration of the Synod, its regions, and its districts, and to edify and support one another in the work they share” (Bylaw 3.10.1.2); and further, that the President “shall meet regularly with the Council of Presidents and, as deemed necessary, with individual district presidents, or small groups of district presidents, to see to it that their administration is in accordance with the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod. He shall receive regular reports on this subject from the district presidents” (Bylaw 3.3.1.2 [b]); and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws (1) suggest a program agenda of the Council of Presidents having principally to do with their representation of the President of the Synod as ecclesiastical supervisors (Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 [b]); and (2) place the responsibility for the development of said program agenda principally with the President of the Synod, whose duty it is to see that the district presidents act in accordance with the Synod’s Constitution and who shall “conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” (Constitution, Art. XI B 2–3); and

WHEREAS, It has become, contrariwise, the practice of the Council of Presidents to set its own program agenda; and

WHEREAS, While the 2013 Synod convention attempted to advance the concerns of “unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of

the Synod” by directing the Council of Presidents to engage in a Koinonia process on three topics of controversy in the Synod, with progress publicly reported (2013 Res. 3-01A), no report of substantive progress in the direction of unity and practice has yet been provided; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to direct that this triennium’s program agenda for the Council of Presidents—that is, the entire part of its meetings not devoted to various Bylaw-mandated administrative tasks and deliberations—be organized by the President of the Synod and not by the Council of Presidents or a subcommittee thereof; and be it further

Resolved, Likewise, to memorialize the Synod convention that the program agenda devised by the President for the council shall be,

in whole and in part, concerned with advancing the “unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” and with counsel regarding the “doctrine and administration of the Synod,” with opportunity for input and mutual counsel by other members of the council but within the program agenda set forth by the President under this directive of the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, Likewise, to memorialize the Synod that the President of the Synod shall, through the Synod’s official publications, deliver pertinent, detailed, timely, and regular reports of the council’s progress in working toward “unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod.”

Montana District

5. Theology and Church Relations

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R11, R14, R59

OVERTURES

5-01

To Endorse Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with the Lutheran Church in Norway

Preamble

Christianity came to Norway around AD 1000 and became the dominant religion by the 12th century. The 16th-century Reformation had a profound effect on the church in Norway, leading it to sever its ties with Rome. The Lutheran church became the state church of Norway. (To this day the “state” or “peoples’ church” continues to receive state support.) In subsequent centuries, Norwegian Lutherans were noted for deep piety and energetic work in missions. The second half of the 20th century, however, marked significant change for the Norwegian state church, most notably an undermining of biblical authority, growing tolerance of theological innovation and false doctrine, growing rejection of Christian moral teachings (e.g., on abortion, sexual behavior), a marked decline of church attendance among the laity, and the decline of mission. In the 21st century, the decay of Norwegian Christianity has become only more evident. The percentage of Baptisms of infants has dropped significantly and is regarded by many as a largely meaningless custom. Regular church attendance is now below 3 percent of the population. The Church of Norway itself tolerated departures from biblical teaching and practice, such as abortion, same-sex marriage, universalism, and so forth.

Despite such decline, there are faithful Christians in Norway. One example is The Lutheran Church in Norway (LCN). The LCN is a small, emerging, strongly confessional Lutheran church (presently with three congregations) that is independent of state support. It upholds the complete authority and inerrancy of Holy Scripture and clearly articulates and practices the truth that Christ alone is the world’s Savior from sin, death, and hell. As has been the practice among Scandinavian Lutherans, it subscribes to the three ecumenical creeds, the Small Catechism, and the Augsburg Confession, with the *Book of Concord* as authoritative for interpreting these documents. The LCN’s purpose is to plant and guide congregations in the true faith.

Its commitment to the Gospel and the Holy Scriptures, and the Confessions, led the LCN, under the leadership of Rev. Torkild Masvie, to request fellowship with the LCMS on March 3, 2011. Doctrinal discussions began in July of that same year, according to the provisions of Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c). Following these visits and discussions (which included LCMS representatives Dr. Albert Collver, Rev. Dan Gilbert, Dr. Joel Lehenbauer, and Rev. Daniel Preus), on May 16, 2014, the CTCR recommended a recognition of fellowship with the LCN to President Harrison and he declared the same on November 7, 2014. A protocol agreement between the two churches was signed on March 7, 2015. On January 17, 2016, Rev. Torkild Masvie was formally installed as Provisional Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Norway at the first official convention of the LCN.

WHEREAS, There is a severe decline of biblical and confessional teaching and life among Norwegian Christianity; and

WHEREAS, By God’s grace, the LCN traces its history to the Lutheran Reformation’s acceptance in Norway and continues to believe, teach, and confess the saving Gospel of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone and is fully committed to the sole authority of Holy Scripture in the church’s teaching and life; and

WHEREAS, By God’s grace, the LCN boldly proclaims God’s holy Law and His saving Gospel, opposing such societal trends as acceptance of abortion, abortifacients, and same-sex marriage, while promoting the glorious truth of Christ’s saving work for all the world; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS, in obedience to God’s Word and the Lutheran Confessions, enjoys church fellowship with many other Lutheran churches throughout the world and endeavors to seek out other Lutheran churches that believe, teach, and confess the same true faith; and

WHEREAS, The LCN has for several years enjoyed altar and pulpit fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, a partner church of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, While living in the United States, the Rev. Torkild Masvie (now bishop of LCN) was a member of an LCMS congregation for three years, and LCN leaders and pastors have enjoyed a working relationship in theological education with numerous LCMS leaders, teachers, and lecturers; and

WHEREAS, The LCN was established as an independent Lutheran church in 2006 and subsequently requested formal church fellowship discussions with the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, Representatives of the LCMS conducted several formal visits to the LCN, and LCN representatives have, in turn, visited the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, After visits, correspondence, and thorough consideration, the LCMS representatives concluded that there is complete agreement between our two churches in doctrine and practice and therefore no obstacle to altar and pulpit fellowship; and

WHEREAS, At its 2010 Convention the Synod adopted Res. 3-04A “To Amend Bylaw 3.9.6.2.2 re Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Small, Formative, or Emerging Confessional Churches,” which recognizes that in certain cases a streamlined approach to altar and pulpit fellowship with such emerging churches would be beneficial; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c) now provides that “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, At its May 2014 meeting the CTCR formally recommended church fellowship with the LCN to the Synod President; and

WHEREAS, President Harrison declared fellowship on November 7, 2014, after consultation with the Praesidium; and

WHEREAS, Necessary protocol documents guiding interactions between the LCMS and the LCN have been adopted; 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 significant cultural and ecclesial challenges, God, by His grace, has equipped and prepared the LCN to give a faithful, confessional Lutheran witness in Norway; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks to God that doctrinal discussions between official representatives of the LCMS and the LCN have

revealed that complete agreement exists between our two churches in doctrine and practice; and be it further

Resolved, That this convention endorse the Synod President's declaration of altar and pulpit fellowship between the LCMS and the LCU; 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 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

5-02

To Endorse Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with the Lutheran Church of Uruguay

Preamble

Christianity came to Latin (or South) America through the work of Spanish missionaries, beginning in the late 15th century. The evangelization of the region where Uruguay is now located followed the entry of the first Spaniards there in 1624. In 1830, Roman Catholicism became the official religion of Uruguay. About a century later, Uruguay became one of the first Latin American countries to formally separate church and state in 1917. Today, Uruguay is the most secular country in all of Latin America. Less than 60 percent of the population identifies itself as Christian (under 50 percent identify as Roman Catholic and slightly more than 10 percent as Protestant—with over 40 percent of the population religiously unaffiliated, atheist/agnostic, or another religion).

A small Lutheran presence in Uruguay was established in 1936 through the efforts of Lutherans in Argentina. Since that time, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina (IELA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB)—both LCMS partner churches and members of the International Lutheran Council—provided pastors to work with the small Lutheran community in Montevideo, establishing St. Paul [San Pablo] Lutheran Church and St. Paul Lutheran School. The LCMS provided financial support for these efforts as early as 1945. The ministry of the school has consistently borne fruit, with about 90 percent of the members of the Lutheran church in Uruguay having attended. In 1998 the congregation became a member of the IELB and in 2004 formed an independent synod, The Lutheran Church of Uruguay (LCU). While there is only one congregation, this small, emerging, confessional Lutheran church has called not only a pastor for its single congregation, Rev. André Luiz Müller (the principal pastor for the LCU), but also a pastor for evangelism and mission, another for school chaplaincy, and a fourth for school administration. The LCU's educational ministry is widely respected in Uruguay and the LCU's vision is to continue that tradition of educational excellence and the evangelistic priorities of its school. Its long-term intention is to establish the first-ever Lutheran university in Spanish-speaking Latin America.

The LCU formally requested fellowship with the LCMS in December 2015. It is in fellowship with the IELA and IELB—both of which have expressed strong support of the LCU, urging the LCMS to recognize that fellowship exists with these brothers and sisters in Christ in Uruguay. LCMS leaders have visited the LCU and examined its doctrine and practice, its doctrinal statements, and its constitution, finding full agreement with our own teaching and practice and no

obstacles to fellowship. Doctrinal discussions were conducted according to the provisions of Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c). Following these visits and discussions, on December 11, 2015, the CTCR recommended recognition of fellowship with the LCU to President Harrison. He formally declared fellowship on January 6, 2016.

WHEREAS, There is great need for the pure proclamation of the Gospel in Uruguay, as there is throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, By God's grace, the LCU believes, teaches, and confesses the saving Gospel of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone and is fully committed to the sole authority of Holy Scripture in the church's teaching and life; and

WHEREAS, By God's grace, the LCU, though small, has established a strong, faithful ministry of outreach through its Lutheran school and envisions a vigorous expansion of that educational outreach through the establishment of a Lutheran university in Uruguay; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS, in obedience to God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions, enjoys church fellowship with many other Lutheran churches throughout the world and endeavors to seek out other Lutheran churches that believe, teach, and confess the same true faith; and

WHEREAS, The LCU has for some time enjoyed altar and pulpit fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, partner churches of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The LCU was established as an independent Lutheran church in 2004 and requested formal church fellowship discussions with the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, Representatives of the LCMS visited the LCU and witnessed its work and examined its teaching; and

WHEREAS, After this visit, correspondence, and further consideration, LCMS representatives concluded that there is complete agreement between our two churches in doctrine and practice and therefore no obstacle to altar and pulpit fellowship; and

WHEREAS, At its 2010 Convention the Synod adopted Res. 3-04A "To Amend Bylaw 3.9.6.2.2 re Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Small, Formative, or Emerging Confessional Churches," which recognizes that in certain cases a streamlined approach to altar and pulpit fellowship with such emerging churches would be beneficial; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (c) now provides that "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, At its December 2015 meeting the CTCR formally recommended church fellowship with the LCU to the Synod President; and

WHEREAS, President Harrison declared fellowship on January 6, 2016, after consultation with the Praesidium; and

WHEREAS, Necessary protocol documents guiding interactions between the LCMS and the LCU have been adopted; 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 God has equipped and prepared the LCU to give a faithful, confessional Lutheran witness in Uruguay; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks to God that discussions between official representatives of the LCMS and the LCU have revealed that complete agreement exists between our two churches in doctrine and practice; and be it further

Resolved, That this convention endorse the Synod President's declaration of altar and pulpit fellowship between the LCMS and the LCU; 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 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

5-03

To Recognize Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala as a Self-Governing Partner Church

WHEREAS, In 1986, the LCMS Board for Mission Services (BFMS) for all intents and purposes turned over the Synod's property and mission in Guatemala to its indigenous Lutheran church, the Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala ("The Lutheran Church in Guatemala"); and

WHEREAS, The aforementioned action by the BFMS for all practical purposes established Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala as a self-governing partner church; and

WHEREAS, For the entire time period since the aforementioned action by the BFMS, the Synod has in practice effectively interacted with and recognized Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala as a self-governing partner church, despite the fact that the Synod did not formally confer this status upon Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala by a convention resolution; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Abdiel Orozco, President of the Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala, in conversations with the Synod leadership and in a Nov. 4, 2015, letter addressed to the director of church relations, has confirmed the church's desire to have this oversight rectified and to receive formal recognition of its status as a self-governing partner church under LCMS Bylaws; and

WHEREAS, The Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala has committed itself to be faithful to the inerrant Scriptures and has subscribed without reservation to the writings of the Book of Concord; and

WHEREAS, The Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala seeks in every way to be and remain a scripturally faithful, confessional Lutheran church body; and

WHEREAS, 2013 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 2013 Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (d), the Board for International Mission has requested and received the approval of the CTCR to propose to the 2016 LCMS convention that the Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala be recognized as a self-governing partner church; and

WHEREAS, Appropriate protocol documents guiding interactions between the LCMS and the Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala have been developed; therefore be it

Resolved, That this resolution be submitted as an overture to the 2016 convention from the Board for International Mission, subject to

appropriate edits and amendments not changing its essential meaning provided by collaborating representatives from the Board for International Mission and the CTCR; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS give thanks to God for the efforts of its missionaries and Guatemalan national pastors of the Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS give thanks that God, by His grace, has equipped and prepared the members of the Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala to give a faithful, confessional Lutheran witness in Guatemala; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks for the growth of this former "daughter church" of the LCMS and its ongoing vitality as a self-governing Lutheran church body; and be it further

Resolved, That we acknowledge with gratitude the unity of confession that has been given to our churches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and be it further

Resolved, That we pray for God's blessings in the coming years on this agreement in the confession of the Gospel that we enjoy as partner churches, and for the power and blessing of the Lord to be upon the members and leaders of the Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala; and be it finally

Resolved, That in celebration and thanksgiving of this partnership in the Gospel, the 2016 LCMS convention assembly signify its approval by rising and singing the Doxology.

Board for International Mission

5-04

To Recognize Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela as a Self-Governing Partner Church

WHEREAS, The LCMS Board for Mission Services (BFMS) for all intents and purposes turned over the Synod's property and mission in Venezuela to its indigenous Lutheran church, the Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela ("The Lutheran Church of Venezuela"); and

WHEREAS, The aforementioned action by the BFMS for all practical purposes established Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela as a self-governing partner church; and

WHEREAS, For the entire time period since the aforementioned action by the BFMS, the Synod has in practice effectively interacted with and recognized Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela as a self-governing partner church, despite the fact that the Synod did not formally confer this status upon Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela by convention resolution; and

WHEREAS, Rev. J. Elías Lozano, president of the Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela, in conversations with the Synod leadership has confirmed the church's desire to have this oversight rectified and to receive formal recognition of its status as a self-governing partner church under LCMS Bylaws; and

WHEREAS, The Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela has committed itself to be faithful to the inerrant Scriptures and has subscribed without reservation to the writings of the Book of Concord; and

WHEREAS, The Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela seeks in every way to be and remain a scripturally faithful, confessional Lutheran church body; and

WHEREAS, 2013 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 2013 Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (d), the Board for International Mission has requested and received the approval of the CTCR to propose to the 2016 LCMS convention that the Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela be recognized as a self-governing partner church; and

WHEREAS, Appropriate protocol documents guiding interactions between the LCMS and the Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela have been developed; therefore be it

Resolved, This resolution be submitted as an overture to the 2016 convention from the Board for International Mission, subject to appropriate edits and amendments not changing its essential meaning provided by collaborating representatives from the Board for International Mission and the CTCR; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS give thanks to God for the efforts of its missionaries and Venezuelan national pastors of the Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS give thanks that God, by His grace, has equipped and prepared the members of the Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela to give a faithful, confessional Lutheran witness in Venezuela; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks for the growth of this former “daughter church” of the LCMS and its ongoing vitality as a self-governing Lutheran church body; and be it further

Resolved, That we acknowledge with gratitude the unity of confession that has been given to our churches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and be it further

Resolved, That we pray for God’s blessings in the coming years on this agreement in the confession of the Gospel that we enjoy as partner churches, and for the power and blessing of the Lord to be upon the members and leaders of the Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela; and be it finally

Resolved, That in celebration and thanksgiving of this partnership in the Gospel, the 2016 LCMS convention assembly signify its approval by rising and singing the Doxology.

Board for International Mission

5-05

To Recognize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kazakhstan as a Self-Governing Partner Church

WHEREAS, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kazakhstan (ELC) traces its origin to the efforts of the LCMS missionaries; and

WHEREAS, The ELC has committed itself to be faithful to the inerrant Scriptures and has subscribed without reservation to the writings of the Book of Concord; and

WHEREAS, The ELC seeks in every way to be and remain a scripturally faithful, confessional Lutheran church body; and

WHEREAS, The ELC is established as an independent Lutheran church and has shared its Agreement on Spiritual Unity, Partnership, and Collaboration of Churches and a representative example of an ELC congregation’s Articles of Association with the LCMS leadership; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Alexander Burtsev, ELC President and pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Lutheran Church in Almaty, in a Nov. 11, 2015, letter addressed to the President of the Synod, the chairman of the Board for International Mission, and the director of church relations, stated that

“The Missouri Synod sent her first missionary to Kazakhstan in 1994. For the past 21 years, the Missouri Synod has operated the mission work in Kazakhstan. We are very grateful for the work of the

Missouri Synod and appreciate her as our mother. Due to the changing laws in Kazakhstan, it is difficult if not impossible for an American missionary to do work in Kazakhstan. The best we can hope is for people from the Missouri Synod to drop in now and then. Yet this sort of arrangement is not the best for the day-to-day operations of a church.

“Currently, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kazakhstan is not a legal entity within Kazakhstan, and likely cannot be so for some time. Our church has five congregations legally registered with the government. ... The five congregations, while not legally recognized as a church body in Kazakhstan, have banded together under an agreement to function as a church body. In total, we have approximately 500 members.

“We should request that the Missouri Synod recognize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kazakhstan to be recognized as a self-governing church. ...

“If possible, we would like you to bring the recognition of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a ‘self-governing church’ before your Synod convention in July 2016”; and

WHEREAS, 2013 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 2013 Bylaw 3.9.5.2.2 (d), the Board for International Mission has requested and received the approval of the CTCR to propose to the 2016 LCMS convention that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kazakhstan be recognized as a self-governing partner church; and

WHEREAS, Appropriate protocol documents guiding interactions between the LCMS and the ELC have been developed; therefore be it

Resolved, This resolution be submitted as an overture to the 2016 convention from the Board for International Mission, subject to appropriate edits and amendments not changing its essential meaning provided by collaborating representatives from the Board for International Mission and the CTCR; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS give thanks to God for the efforts of its missionaries and Kazakhstan national pastors of the ELC; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS give thanks that God, by His grace, has equipped and prepared the members of the ELC to give a faithful, confessional Lutheran witness in Kazakhstan; and be it further

Resolved, That we give thanks for 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 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 pray for God’s blessings in the coming years on this agreement in the confession of the Gospel that we enjoy as partner churches, and for the power and blessing of the Lord to be upon the members and leaders of the ELC; and be it finally

Resolved, That in celebration and thanksgiving of this partnership in the Gospel, the 2016 LCMS convention assembly signify its approval by rising and singing the Doxology.

Board for International Mission

5-06

To Ask CTCR and Seminaries to Evaluate Fellowship with AALC

WHEREAS, The LCMS in convention from 1967 through 1995 has repeatedly reaffirmed its historic position of closed Communion; and

WHEREAS, The 2007 convention entered into fellowship with The American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC), which officially does not practice closed Communion (“Do you practice open or closed communion? We practice ‘responsible communion,’ which is neither open nor closed”; <http://taalc.org/FAQ/CommunionInTheAALC.html>); and

WHEREAS, Remaining in fellowship with a church body that does not practice closed Communion is inconsistent with our LCMS practice of closed Communion; and

WHEREAS, The AALC sends its theological students to Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, for pastoral education and maintains its national office on that campus; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the CTCR, Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne to give a theological evaluation and opinion about reentering discussions with the AALC and/or remaining in or breaking fellowship with the AALC, to be presented at the next Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, to discuss the matter of our differences regarding whom we admit to the altar in Holy Communion with the students and officials of the AALC in their midst.

Zion
Chippewa Falls, WI

5-07

To Warn Against Occult Pseudoscience Practices

WHEREAS, The technique of Reiki and other occult pseudoscience therapies are being practiced in various healthcare institutions; and

WHEREAS, The origins of such practices are rooted in beliefs that are contrary to the Christian faith; and

WHEREAS, Many of our members lack understanding of this occult nature and the dangers that such occult pseudoscience practices pose to the Christian faith; therefore be it

Resolved, That the district encourage its members not to participate in ungodly occult pseudoscience practices; and be it further

Resolved, That the district encourage the dissemination of information contained in the CTCR’s evaluation of Religious Organizations and Movements; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district in convention memorialize the Synod to do the same.

English District
Farmington, MI

5-08

To Instruct CTCR to Provide Suggested Guidelines/Policies for Implementing Social Media

WHEREAS, Every LCMS congregation, members of the Synod (both ordained and commissioned), and Synod employees or representatives desire to reach people with the Gospel and remain faithful in witness and confession; and

WHEREAS, Social media is defined as “forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content” (merriam-webster.com); and

WHEREAS, Numerous agencies of the Synod, both seminaries, every Concordia university in the LCMS system, and countless congregations and professional church workers actively participate and engage in social media in ways that are potentially both beneficial and detrimental to the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* demonstrated on July 15, 2015, the willingness to quote and widely circulate the social media content created by Synod President Matthew Harrison as “critical”; and

WHEREAS, St. Paul encourages us to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3); and

WHEREAS, In Martin Luther’s explanation to the Eighth Commandment we confess, “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 speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way”; and

WHEREAS, The 2013 *Handbook* of the Synod clearly states that “the Commission on Theology and Church Relations shall provide guidance to the Synod in matters of theology and church relations. . . . It shall bring matters of theology and church relations through special studies and documents to the membership of the Synod and to conferences” (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.1); and

WHEREAS, The *Handbook* also states that the CTCR “shall suggest and provide studies of contemporary issues, including also current social issues, as they affect the church and as the church may affect such social issues” (Bylaw 3.9.5.2.1 [c]); therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention direct the CTCR to study the use and benefits of social media among and in the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That the CTCR prepare, with its study, a report with suggested guidelines and/or policies beneficial to LCMS officers, pastors, and congregations for implementing social media in their respective ministries; and be it further

Resolved, That the CTCR publish and distribute this report throughout the Synod in its usual manner; and be it finally

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention direct the CTCR to issue this report prior to the next Synod convention.

Circuit 1
Texas District

5-09

To Evaluate Theological Implications of Practice of Cremation

WHEREAS, The practice of cremation is gaining acceptance in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Our church body has stated nothing official regarding the practice of cremation; and

WHEREAS, Many pastors have encouraged the use of cremation, and may have for themselves drawn plans to be cremated; and

WHEREAS, Requests concerning the scriptural acceptance or condemnation of cremation continue to increase; and

WHEREAS, The Rev. Dr. Alvin Schmidt (LCMS) has written a book entitled *Dust to Dust, Ashes to Ashes: A Biblical and Christian Examination of Cremation* (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 2005) which condemns the practice of cremation; and

WHEREAS, This is the only book known among us to address this topic, but it does not represent the official theological position of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to assign to our two seminaries the task of evaluating the theological implications of the practice of cremation; and be it further

Resolved, That the seminaries render a published opinion to be disseminated and considered by our Synod during her 2019 convention.

English District
Farmington, Michigan

5-10

To Avoid Practice of Communing Infants and Very Young Children

WHEREAS, Paul says in 1 Corinthians, “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” (11:27–30); and

WHEREAS, Some children at an early age may be able to so examine themselves, but infants are unable to discern the body and blood of the Lord, as 1 Corinthians 11 requires; and

WHEREAS, The Great Commission requires the church to make disciples both by first baptizing them in the name of the triune God, and then teaching them to observe all that our Lord has commanded us (Matthew 28:18–20), including the Lord’s Supper. This teaching cannot happen yet in the case of infants and very young children, and this catechetical component must precede admission to the Lord’s Supper; and

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran Confessions further provide direction regarding admission to the Lord’s Supper: “As we treated Holy Baptism under three headings, so we must deal with the second sacrament in the same way, stating what it is, what its benefits are, and who is to receive it. All these are established from the words by which Christ instituted it. So everyone who wishes to be a Christian and go to the sacrament should be familiar with them. For we do not intend to admit to the sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come” (LC V 1–2). Infants and very young children are unable to comprehend what God promises in the Lord’s Supper or its benefits. Nor do they “know what they seek or why they come”; and

WHEREAS, No one should be forced to commune, and infants and very young children are incapable of expressing their desire to participate in the Sacrament of the Altar. As stated in the Large Catechism, “Now, it is true, as we have said, that no one should by any means be forced or compelled to go to the Sacrament, lest we institute a new murdering of souls” (LC V 42); and

WHEREAS, Infants and the very young have not been, and are not capable of being, examined by their pastor or the church. The Augsburg Confession states, “All those able to do so partake of the Sacrament together. This also increases the reverence and devotion of public worship. No one is admitted to the Sacrament without first being examined. The people are also advised about the dignity and use of the Sacrament, about how it brings great consolation to anxious consciences, so that they too may learn to believe God and to expect and ask from Him all that is good. This worship pleases God

[Colossians 1:9–10]. Such use of the Sacrament nourishes true devotion toward God” (AC XXIV 5–8); and

WHEREAS, “Christ commands us, ‘Do this in remembrance of Me’ (Luke 22:19). Therefore, the Mass was instituted so that those who use the Sacrament should remember, in faith, the benefits they receive through Christ and how their anxious consciences are cheered and comforted. To remember Christ is to remember His benefits. It means to realize that they are truly offered to us. It is not enough only to remember history. (The Jewish people and the ungodly also remember this.) Therefore, the Mass is to be used for administering the Sacrament to those that need consolation. Ambrose says, ‘Because I always sin, I always need to take the medicine’” (AC XXIV 30–33); and

WHEREAS, The CTCR has twice in recent years researched and written two opinions on the practice of admitting infants and young children to the Lord’s Supper, first in *Response to Concerns of the South Wisconsin District Circuits 18 and 19 Regarding Infant Communion* (1997) and more recently in *Knowing What We Seek and Why We Come* (2014); and

WHEREAS, The congregations and pastors who are members of the LCMS must require of communicants the sort of careful self-examination required by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11. To this end, and for the sake of those who wish to partake of the Lord’s Supper, congregations and pastors must admit to this Sacrament only those persons who are of sufficient age and discretion to examine themselves; and

WHEREAS, The practice of communing infants (paedocommunion) is not in harmony with Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, Those who wish to extend the blessings of Holy Communion to infants or very young children are not adequately considering the special biblical purposes and conditions of this Sacrament; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention affirms that the two CTCR opinions, *Response to Concerns of the South Wisconsin District Circuits 18 and 19 Regarding Infant Communion* (1997) and *Knowing What We Seek and Why We Come* (2014), are faithful to Scripture and consistent with confessional Lutheran practice since the Reformation; and be it further

Resolved, That while the 2016 LCMS convention recognizes that there is no precise numerical age for first communion required by Scripture or the Confessions, worthy reception does involve conscious self-examination and catechetical instruction so that communicants know what they seek to receive at Christ’s altar and why they come to the Sacrament coupled with pastoral examination to encourage worthy use of the Sacrament; and be it further

Resolved, That the communing of infants and very young children prior to their instruction and examination in the faith is contrary to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and should not be the practice of LCMS congregations and pastors; and be it finally

Resolved, That for the sake of the unity of Holy Scripture, for the unity of practice and doctrine for all LCMS congregations, and for the steadfast Christian faith of all our congregations’ members, this convention strongly urges all LCMS pastors and congregations to avoid the practice of communing infants and very young children.

Concordia
Louisville, KY

5-11

To Reaffirm Standard for Pastoral Admission to Lord's Supper: Full Agreement in All Articles of Christian Doctrine

WHEREAS, Paul in 1 Corinthians says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (11:26), denoting that our Communion confesses and proclaims all that Christ's death means and brings to us; and

WHEREAS, The substance of that confession and proclamation is inclusive of "all the articles of the faith as well as in the proper use of the holy sacraments" (FC SD X 31); and

WHEREAS, Paul also instructs us that to participate (have *koinonia*) in an altar is to participate in what that altar stands for and brings when he writes, "Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?" (1 Cor. 10:18–22); and

WHEREAS, Great spiritual harm comes to those who do not recognize that they receive the very body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and therefore a pastor must exercise proper spiritual care (1 Cor. 4:1) in the admission of those coming to Christ's altar, as Paul writes, "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 the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Cor. 11:27–29); and

WHEREAS, Paul writes that the Corinthian congregation is to fully agree with one another when he writes, "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); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus Christ also says, "I do not ask for these only [the apostles], but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. The glory that You have given Me I have given them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and You in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as you loved me" (John 17:20–23); and

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran Confessions recognize that from the days of the Early Church Fathers, proper pastoral care included admitting or denying admission to the Lord's Supper, as when the Augsburg Confession says, "The Fathers before Gregory make no mention of any private Mass [Communion]. Chrysostom says 'that the priest stands daily before the altar, inviting some to the Communion and keeping back others'" (AC XXIV 35–37 [Bente/Dau]); and

WHEREAS, C. F. W. Walther (first president of the LCMS) comments on 1 Corinthians 10:17, writing,

Accordingly, in that Christians eat of the one bread of the Sacrament, all become mystically, that is in a spiritual, moral, or figurative way, one body, and by the act of eating together a person is declared to be one in Christ with all Christians. For as the bread consists of innumerable many particles of baked flour, so that it is impossible to separate these particles again from one another, even so are all Christians one in Christ through Communion and many thousand times more intimately bound

together than even body and soul into one organism. They are actually one. One God dwells in them. One Spirit rules in them. They all have one Savior in them, and one Lord Jesus speaks from them. And now consider what a grievous sin those commit who administer Communion to those who are, after all, of another faith and confession, and confess themselves to be one and brothers with them.... Therefore one who goes to Holy Communion in a Lutheran church declares openly before the world: I hold with this church, with the doctrine that is confessed here, and with all the confessors who belong here. The pastor who administers the Sacrament to him declares the very same thing" (C. F. W. Walther, "Communion Fellowship," *Essays for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 215);

and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has repeatedly reaffirmed that to administer the Lord's Supper in accord with Christ's institution is to do so admitting only properly instructed Lutherans to our Lutheran altars, thus requiring full agreement in all articles of doctrine prior to establishing fellowship at the altar (1967 Res. 2-19; 1983 Res. 3-12; 1986 Res. 3-08; 1995 Res. 3-08; 1998 Res. 3-05.); and

WHEREAS, Many LCMS congregations today have sadly abandoned the standard of full doctrinal agreement for admission to the Lord's Table by limiting that agreement only to a selected few doctrines, or by eliminating any limiting Communion statement at all, or by opening the Communion Table to all baptized Christians, and the like, thus abdicating their pastoral oversight responsibility toward the spiritual well-being of those communing or proclaiming a unity in doctrine which does not exist; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS reaffirm that the standard for pastoral admission to the Lord's Supper is full agreement in all articles of Christian doctrine.

Zion
Chippewa Falls, WI

5-12

To Direct District Presidents re Errant Communion Practices

WHEREAS, "Open Communion," though not officially sanctioned, still exists across the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, This practice is not consistent with or faithful to our Synod's official practice of "closed Communion," by which only members in good standing of LCMS congregations or members of those churches with whom the LCMS is in altar and pulpit fellowship are to commune; and

WHEREAS, The practice of "open Communion" offends against Holy Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, the Synod's historic practice, and the members of its congregations; and

WHEREAS, It is the duty of the Synod, as pastors and congregations, above all to promote sound doctrine, including calling the erring to repentance and disciplining those who will not turn from their errors, all for the sake of the salvation of sinners; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention publicly reject and condemn all such errant Communion practices as mentioned above; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod's district presidents visit every congregation during their elected time in office (Bylaw 4.4.4—"The district president shall, in accordance with the Constitution of the Synod, in his ministry of ecclesiastical supervision visit the congregations of the district.") to make sure the Communion practice of each congregation is in accord with the official teaching of the Synod and in accord with the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it finally

Resolved, That the President of the Synod counsel the district presidents toward faithfulness in our official Communion practice and to exercise discipline against errant practice when appropriate and necessary.

Zion
Chippewa Falls, WI

5-13

To Direct District Presidents to Review Communion Statements and Practice

WHEREAS, The official position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod regarding admission to Holy Communion is: “That pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, except in situations of emergency and in special cases of pastoral care, commune individuals of only those Lutheran synods now in fellowship with us” (1967 Res. 2-19); and

WHEREAS, The position of the LCMS regarding admission to Holy Communion is biblical (1 Cor. 10:22; 11:26–29), taught by our Lutheran Confessions (AC XXIV) and affirmed by the Synod in convention (1969 Res. 3-16 “To Refrain from Selective Fellowship”; 1986 Res. 3-08 “To Maintain Practice of Close Communion”; 1995 Res. 3-08 “To Reaffirm the Practice of Close(d) Communion”; 2007 Res. 3-09 “To Address Administration of the Lord’s Supper”); and

WHEREAS, The principles of Communion fellowship necessitate that statements and/or questions prepared for the purpose of self-examination and admission to the altar include a clear presentation that visitors to LCMS congregations may be permitted to commune only if they are members of another LCMS congregation or a member of a congregation of those Lutheran synods which are now in fellowship with us; and

WHEREAS, LCMS President Matthew Harrison has reported to the Synod, through the April 2015 *Reporter Supplement*, that he has seen a variety of Communion statements across the LCMS that do not always reflect the scriptural and confessional position of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, President Harrison requested the CTCR to provide guidance on formulating congregational Communion statements that reflect the scriptural and confessional position of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The guidelines prepared by the CTCR were mailed to all LCMS congregations and also printed in the April 2015 *Reporter Supplement*; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention commend President Harrison for his diligence and desire to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3); and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod express its appreciation for the work of the CTCR in preparing “Guidelines for Congregational, District, and Synod Communion Statements”; and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors and congregations of the Synod be encouraged to use the CTCR guidelines to reexamine their Communion statements and make whatever changes may be necessary in order that all Communion statements of LCMS congregations properly reflect the scriptural and confessional position of the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod direct each district president to review the Communion statements and practice of admission to the altar of all congregations under his ecclesiastical supervision; and be it further

Resolved, That each district president admonish pastors and congregations under his ecclesiastical supervision where the practice is

not in keeping with the teaching of Scripture and the official position of the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That each district president complete this review and report his findings to the President of the Synod within two years of the conclusion of this convention.

Lafayette Circuit
Indiana District

5-14

To Reaffirm 1947 Convention Resolution re Intinction

WHEREAS, The practice of intinction has been creeping back into use in various places in the Synod (and at one district convention in 2015); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at its 1947 convention passed the following resolution:

ACTION The following report of Committee 7 regarding this matter (Memorial 619 a) was adopted: Having considered Matt. 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19, 20 (chap. 22:17, 18 of the Passover); 1 Cor. 10:16, 17, 21; and 1 Cor. 11:23–26, your Committee finds nothing stated which would forbid the use of the individual Communion cup. And we hold that the manner and mode of distributing the bread, be it by breaking or by distributing in the form of a host, and the mode and manner of distributing the wine, be it in one or two or more cups, do not belong to the essence of the Sacrament. We definitely reject intinction, because while distributing the bread, the Savior said, “Take, eat!” Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22, and while giving the wine, He said, “*Drink* ye all of it!” Matt. 26:27; Mark 14:23 [emphasis added]. Intinction would be a direct violation of the words of institution.

and

WHEREAS, The Augsburg Confession states, “‘*Drink* of it, all of you’ (Matthew 26:27) Christ has clearly commanded that all should drink from the cup” (AC XXII 1–2; emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, The Augsburg Confession states, “It is clear that any custom introduced against God’s commandments is not to be allowed, as Church law bears witness” (AC XXII 9); and

WHEREAS, The Apology of the Augsburg Confession asks, “Why is Christ’s ordinance changed, especially when He Himself calls it His testament?” (Ap XXII 2); and

WHEREAS, The Apology of The Augsburg Confession states, “He had delivered the use of both kinds, as the text, 1 Corinthians 11, clearly shows. He says ‘do this’ (11:24), first about His body; afterward Paul repeats the same words about the cup ‘Christ’s blood.’” (Ap XXII 3); and

WHEREAS, The Apology of The Augsburg Confession states, “They also bring up the danger of spilling (the wine) and certain similar things. These are not serious enough to change Christ’s ordinance” (Ap XXII 14); and

WHEREAS, “The Church does not allow itself to change Christ’s ordinances into unimportant matters” (Ap XXII 15); therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS instruct and inform its congregations to refrain from using intinction in the Sacrament of the Altar.

St. James, Bothell, WA; Lutheran Church of the Atonement,
Burien, WA

5-15

To Standardize Admission to the Lord's Supper

WHEREAS, There is a wide diversity of practice in admission to the Lord's Supper in the Synod's congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That Constitution Article VI be amended to insert the following point between present points 2 and 3 as a new point:

PROPOSED WORDING

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.
2. Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as: ...
3. Congregations and pastors shall admit to the Lord's Supper only persons who are communicant members in good standing of Synod congregations or who are communicant members in good standing of Lutheran congregations in altar fellowship with the Synod. Exceptions to this rule may be made by pastors or chaplains in cases of (1) imminent death—or the possible threat of the same, (2) emergency, (3) war, (4) severe illness, (5) intense personal crisis, or (6) individuals who are in a "state of confession"; but only for Lutherans who were at some time communicant members of a Lutheran congregation. In such cases, the pastor or chaplain shall make an examination of such person's understanding of the Lord's Supper prior to communing him or her, if that is possible.
4. Regular call of pastors....

Trinity
Evansville, IN

5-16

To Commend the Practice of Holy Communion to God's Direction and Blessing

WHEREAS, Holy Communion is a gift to be joyfully received in thanksgiving (Eucharist) and is a sacrament that offers forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation for all who are "worthy and well prepared"; and

WHEREAS, Luther states in the Small Catechism that "he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words, 'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins'"; and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach that the Sacrament is for all, and a close Communion centered around the gift offered to all the baptized who

- a. know Jesus Christ as their Savior;
- b. recognize that the body and blood of Christ are truly present in the bread and wine;
- c. are able to examine themselves and repent of their sins; and
- d. look to God's Holy Spirit for help in living the Christian life; and

WHEREAS, Individual congregations and pastors are equipped to share Holy Communion and administer this sacrament in a confessional and biblical manner; and

WHEREAS, Article VII of the LCMS Constitution states: "Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers" and "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 a condition of a congregation is concerned"; and

WHEREAS, That congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod find that the practice of "closed Communion" is being advocated by some LCMS congregations and leadership as the doctrinally pure and only acceptable position, even though this understanding of doctrine is not taught in either the Scriptures or the Confessions; and

WHEREAS, Any sort of mandate or oversight and discipline that would specify how Communion is to be enacted in local congregations is a violation of our Constitution; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention encourage our congregations to continually review their practice of Holy Communion (whether close or closed Communion) and to prayerfully seek God's direction and blessing in enacting sound pastoral care that is grounded in the authority of Holy Scripture and the Confessions and does not go beyond this source or norm.

Village
Bronxville, NY

5-17

To Request CTCR Study of "Orders of Creation"

WHEREAS, The doctrine of creation is being used by some to support a prohibition of women's ordination; and

WHEREAS, The theology being used is "new" Lutheran theology; for instance, Edward W. A. Koehler, in his "A Summary of Christian Doctrine" published by Concordia Publishing House, does not even mention this doctrine; and

WHEREAS, An article published in *Concordia Theological Monthly* argues that the doctrine is not from the Lutheran tradition but is associated with the Reformed tradition (Edward H. Schroeder, *Concordia Theological Monthly* 43, March (3), 1972, pp. 165–78); therefore be it

Resolved, That the timeline of use and appearance of the doctrine of "orders of creation" be studied by the CTCR and the information shared for comment from the congregations and rostered workers of the church; and be it further

Resolved, That this study make precise notation of when and where this doctrine came into use and specifically the occasions (Reformation era, Walther era, Orthodoxy era) when this doctrine was unknown and unused by confessional Lutheran theologians; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS receive the CTCR report by the next sequential convention following this convention.

Village
Bronxville, NY

5-18

To Call for Evaluation of Discretion Used to Carry Out Closed Communion and for Future Synodwide Visitations

WHEREAS, The practice of open Communion has, sadly, become acceptable within the congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

WHEREAS, Such practice of open Communion undoubtedly puts at risk our neighbor possibly to eat and drink judgement against himself as well as to profane the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (see Holy Scripture below); and

WHEREAS, The practice of closed Communion is a salutary practice that the church is brought to carry out for the following three *scriptural* reasons:

1. We believe, teach, and confess that Christ's *true* body and blood *are* delivered in, with, and under the bread and the wine through the Sacrament, as proclaimed in Matthew 26:26–28:

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." [See also Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–25.]

2. God desires that a unified confession in the oneness of His doctrine be a prerequisite of communing together! This is proclaimed in 1 Corinthians 1:10 (emphasis added) and 10:16–17:
Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the *same* thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the *same* mind and in the *same* judgment.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

3. A misunderstanding regarding Holy Communion could lead to the harm of our neighbor, as God's Word proclaims in 1 Corinthians 11:27–29:

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. [All quotations from NKJV.]

and

WHEREAS, The previous Holy Scripture reveals that closed Communion is a Gospel-inspired act of love; a safeguard that the Sacrament is to be received in a steadfast confession of faith (a oneness in God's doctrine) and only to one's benefit; and

WHEREAS, Not doing anything about the practice of open Communion does not hallow God's name but profanes His name among us and allows the surrendering of our neighbor's hearts, minds, and souls to a misunderstanding of God's Holy Scripture regarding the Sacrament of the Altar (specifically the real presence of the Lord); denies the imperative of a unified confession in the oneness of God's doctrine as a prerequisite of communing together; and further knowingly opens them to the risk of eating and drinking judgement upon themselves; and

WHEREAS, The Preface to the Small Catechism discloses how Martin Luther himself carried out visitations of the congregations and discovered that corrections needed to take place (inevitably leading to the creation of the Small and Large Catechisms), thus marking visitations as a very important task that needs to take place in order to (by the grace of God) aid the Church in equipping the saints, staying off error, and sustaining God's truth; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention determine to devise an "Official Evaluation of the Discretion Used to Carry Out Closed Communion" that identifies the unorthodox practice of open Communion, aiming to keep the practice of LCMS pastors and/or congregations true to God's Word; further safe-guarding those pastors and/or congregations (and the *potential* Christians that may come about within them); and be it further

Resolved, That the convention, in order to avoid the ongoing spread of the unorthodox practice of open Communion, have the development of the official evaluation be constructed by a committee of LCMS pastors who in no way currently utilize (or endorse) the practice of open Communion; and be it further

Resolved, That the "Official Evaluation of the Discretion Used to Carry Out Closed Communion" that is eventually created be reported to 2019 LCMS convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2019 convention, upon adoption of the "Official Evaluation of the Discretion Used to Carry Out Closed Communion," then direct each of her district presidents to put the official evaluation into use through the district president's visitation of every LCMS pastor and/or congregation within his district (with the obvious assistance of his circuit visitors); and be it further

Resolved, That the district presidents (with the assistance of their circuit visitors), according to 2 Timothy 4:2, correct, encourage (and if need be admonish) all pastors and/or congregations that are in error concerning the unorthodox practice of open Communion, which falsely conveys the Word of God; and be it finally

Resolved, That (having been encouraged and admonished) those pastors and/or congregations who, sadly, refuse to correct their unorthodox practice of open Communion, and, after futile admonition, remain impenitent, be expelled from the Synod, as God's Word exhorts in 1 Timothy 6:3–5.

Grace
San Mateo, CA

5-19

To Equip Congregations with Resources Explaining Close(d) Communion

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has the practice of closed Communion; and

WHEREAS, There are many who are confused or uninformed by this practice; therefore be it

Resolved, That the district presidents in regular visitation encourage this practice and vocally support pastors and congregations who practice this; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod and districts provide resources to congregations instructing and teaching this practice.

Winona Circuit
Minnesota South District

5-20

To Instruct Synod and Districts to Promote Every Sunday Communion

WHEREAS, The opportunity to receive the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day was a reality cherished by Luther and set forth clearly with high esteem by our Lutheran Confessions (AC XXIV and Ap XXIV); and

WHEREAS, The 1983 CTCR document on the Lord's Supper (p. 28) and our Synod's 1986 translation of Luther's Small Catechism both remind us that the Scriptures place the Lord's Supper at the center of worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20, 33), and not as an appendage or an occasional extra; and

WHEREAS, The 1995 LCMS convention adopted a resolution stating, "*Resolved*, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention encourage its pastors and congregations to study the scriptural, confessional, and historical witness to every Sunday Communion with a view to recovering the opportunity for receiving the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day"; and

WHEREAS, Twenty-one years have passed since this resolution was adopted, and there are many congregations that do not offer the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day; therefore be it

Resolved, That in their regular visitation of congregations, district presidents actively promote and encourage the faithful practice of offering the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day and other feast days; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod and districts equip congregations with resources that encourage this practice; and be it finally

Resolved, That congregations again be encouraged to offer the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day and other feast days.

Winona Circuit
Minnesota South District

5-21

**To Encourage Synod to Complete Work
on Transforming Churches Network,
Joint Prayer with Those Who Deny Christ,
and Role of Women in the Church**

*(Reference 2015 District Convention Overtures
01-08-15; 01-09-15; 01-10-15)*

WHEREAS, The district received overtures encouraging the Synod to continue and complete its work on the evaluation of the Transforming Churches Network, joint prayer with those who deny that Christ is the only way to the true God, and the authority of women over men in the church even in humanly established offices; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has received overtures addressing the concerns brought forth in these referenced overtures; and

WHEREAS, The study of these concerns continues to be ongoing through the appropriate channels within Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Mid-South District in convention encourages the work, study, and evaluation leading to the completion of these concerns; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod give a final report on these overtures to the Mid-South District when available or by the next district convention in 2018.

Mid-South District

5-22

**To Direct CTCR and Seminaries to Evaluate
Transforming Churches Network**

WHEREAS, The Transforming Churches Network (TCN) is listed on the Synod's website as a Recognized Service Organization; and

WHEREAS, Although it is concerned for the health of existing LCMS congregations, TCN determines a congregation's health based chiefly on numerical measurements and sociology such as attendance numbers and financial giving but not on its adherence to the teaching of the Scriptures or the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, TCN advocates changing the main emphasis of a pastor's duties from "being the lead caretaker of the existing congregation to the lead missionary to lost people in the community" (TCN, "Pastor Survey," question 7a*), thus diminishing the pastoral care of the Law and Gospel that pastors have historically provided to members of the congregations they serve (John 21:15-17); and

WHEREAS, TCN initially asks pastors to see how comfortable they are with this statement: "If we do not achieve the 5% growth goal

in the next 24 months, and 5% growth annually thereafter, I will put my name out for another call" ("Pastor Survey," question 8d*), thus suggesting that the man who is divinely called to be a pastor is only effective if he meets preset worldly standards, even though both Jesus and Paul did not always find such worldly success in their ministries (John 6:60ff.; 2 Tim. 4:9-16; Acts 17:1-9); and

WHEREAS, TCN also asks congregation leaders to determine if "the leaders of this church hope to initiate a style of worship service that appeals to unreached people" (TCN, "Leader's Survey," question 3e), thus suggesting that a congregation's worship style should be based on sociology instead of the Word of God as it has been taught in the Lutheran Confessions, or that a congregation's worship style should be changed even if it exclusively uses the approved hymnals of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The Holy Spirit alone is responsible for converting people to saving faith by His Word and Sacraments, when and where He pleases; and

WHEREAS, Jesus in Matt. 23:15 teaches that a strong missionary zeal without the proper biblical and Christ-centered doctrinal teaching is spiritually dangerous; and

WHEREAS, We as Christians are called to be in this world but not of it; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the CTCR, Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne to give a theological evaluation of the premise, methods, and materials of Transforming Churches Network; and be it further

Resolved, That this theological evaluation be completed and published in *The Lutheran Witness* within a year of the completion of this convention.

Zion
Chippewa Falls, WI

*This overture refers to a previous version of this survey. These quotations are no longer on the official TCN website.

5-23

**To Suspend Application of "Reduction in Force"
to Pastoral Office Pending CTCR Decision**

WHEREAS, In 2010, the Synod's 64th Regular Convention adopted Res. 2-02 "To Assist Congregations and Support Workers in Planning and Implementing the 'Reduction in Force' Policy"; and

WHEREAS, The reduction in force policy document specifies that it should not apply to the Pastoral Office, cited in 'Theological Position of LCMS' on page 23; and

WHEREAS, The reduction in force policy is being used to remove rightly called ordained pastors from their called position as pastors; and

WHEREAS, The reduction in force policy mistakenly implies that not all called pastors on the staff of a congregation are members of the pastoral office; and

WHEREAS, These ordained pastors are wrongly dismissed from their called positions as pastors; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod and its districts examine the application of Res. 2-02 reduction in force policy on its ordained pastors and congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) examine the impact of the "Reduction in Force Policy" upon the theology and practice of the divine call and its effects

on the Office of the Holy Ministry and the congregations the pastors serve; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Res. 2-02 reduction in force policy be suspended from use until it is deemed theologically and confessionally sound by the CTCR.

Circuits 3 and 4
Michigan District

5-24

To Change Intentional Interim Ministry Program to Reflect Historic LCMS Theology and Practice of the Call

WHEREAS, The practice of “intentional interim ministry” has grown dramatically within the LCMS in the last 30 years; and

WHEREAS, There are laudable goals for the practice (e.g., assisting congregations in dealing with unusual and/or traumatic circumstances at the end of a previous pastorate) as they prepare to call a new pastor; and

WHEREAS, Such intentional interim pastors have specialized training to assist congregations during such times of transition; and

WHEREAS, Currently, intentional interim pastors in the LCMS are issued “non-tenured” calls for a specified, contracted, limited duration, “the normal ‘non-tenured call’ for an intentional interim [being] 18 months” (*LCMS Circuit Visitors Manual*, 2015–2018, p. 31); and

WHEREAS, The parameters under which it is suggested that congregations consider thus calling an intentional interim pastor are so broad that nearly every vacant congregation of the LCMS would be encouraged to consider this program *prior to* engaging the regular call process; and

WHEREAS, Intentional interim pastors are given full parish pastor status within the polity of the LCMS, including full voting in the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The practice of “temporary” or “non-tenured” calls to the Office of the Ministry was a common American abuse of the doctrine of the call which the founding fathers of the LCMS rejected explicitly¹; and

WHEREAS, The current practice of intentional interim ministry within the LCMS contradicts this historic position of our Synod; and

WHEREAS, Nomenclature ought not simply be an arbitrary label, but reflect the reality of the thing named; therefore be it

Resolved, That for use within our Synod, the term “intentional interim ministry” be changed to “intensive vacancy ministry,” and the term “intentional interim pastor” be changed to “intensive vacancy pastor” in Synod usage (website, publications, and the like of the Synod and its districts); and be it further

Resolved, That such intensive vacancy pastors are no longer issued “divine calls” by the congregations they serve, in keeping with the more common practice of “vacancy pastors”; and be it further

Resolved, That intensive vacancy pastors, for purposes of the polity of the Synod, are considered regular “vacancy pastors,” i.e., that they do not have a vote in the Synod (circuit forums, district conventions) but are advisory members of the Synod according to their roster status; and be it further

Resolved, That the parameters under which congregations are encouraged to consider intensive vacancy (intentional interim) ministry be reviewed, such that the normal process to issue a divine call to a permanent (as the Lord wills) pastor *remain* the norm; and be it finally

Resolved, That current intentional interim pastors be commended and thanked for their service in the past to the many congregations of

the Synod who have benefited from the Word and Sacraments of God that they have provided to those congregations, and for their specialized training and faithful, sincere love for God’s church.

Notes

¹*Kromayer*: “The preaching office may not be conferred by those who call through a contract for certain years or with the reservation to have the freedom to dismiss the freely called person. For God has nowhere granted or permitted those who call the right to make such a contract. Hence neither the one calling nor the one who is called may regard such a call or dismissal as divine.” C. F. W. Walther, *The Church and the Office of the Ministry*, trans. J. T. Mueller, ed. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), p. 308.

“From the beginning our Synod had to take a definite stand on this question. Among the conditions of membership in Synod, the following is listed: ‘Regular (not temporary) call of the pastor.’... This has been the consistent practice of our Synod since that time and has been stated again and again in official papers presented at conventions, and in our periodicals.” P. F. Koehnke, “The Call into the Holy Ministry,” *The Abiding Word* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), 1:380.

St. John, Rensselaer, IN; Trinity, Goodland, IN

5-25

To Review Role of Women in Congregation and Synod Offices

Preamble

In 1969, the Synod addressed the subject of women in the church by adopting Res. 2-17, largely based on a 1968 report by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR). However, the commission began thinking differently of these matters during the 1980s and ’90s. In 2004 Res. 3-08A, the Synod affirmed the conclusions of the then-latest (1994) CTCR report on the subject, even though a dissenting opinion to that report had been prepared by five theologians on the CTCR shortly after it was adopted. The present overture is submitted in the hope that the Synod will “back up” and assign the CTCR, with the help of the seminaries, to issue a new report to the Synod which will contribute toward clearing up ambiguities and misunderstandings concerning this important subject.

The following overture greatly resembles Ov. 4-21, submitted to the 2013 Synod convention by the Missouri District and its Carrollton Circuit. Via an omnibus resolution, the 2013 convention referred the overture to the CTCR but gave the CTCR no specific assignment in reference to the overture (see 2013 *Proceedings*, p. 199).

Proposed Action

WHEREAS, The Synod, in adopting 2004 Res. 3-08A (“To Affirm the Conclusions of the 1994 CTCR Report: *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*”), seems to have affirmed only the first of two long-employed criteria for determining whether women can serve in various lay congregational offices (see 1969 Resolution 2-17) (*Explanation: Previously the two criteria had been [1] By serving in a given office does a woman do things which are distinctive functions of the pastoral office? and [2] Might a woman be violating the order of creation by serving in certain congregational offices in which she does not carry out distinctive functions of the pastoral office?*); and

WHEREAS, In 1995 Res. 3-06A, the Synod directed the CTCR “in consultation with the faculties of the seminaries” to continue studying the issues in its 1994 report on *The Service of Women in*

Congregational and Synodical Offices and the resulting dissenting opinion that was signed by five theological professors on the commission; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR did not report to subsequent LCMS conventions a record of resulting communication with or from the seminaries on this topic; and

WHEREAS, Since 1995, the CTCR has issued three documents relevant to this general subject:

1. *Authentein*, a relatively brief study on the meaning of this Greek word, which drew no conclusions concerning application in the contemporary church but which corrected an assertion in the 1968 CTCR *Woman Suffrage in the Church* report concerning the meaning of this term;
2. *The Creator's Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church*, a more comprehensive report which, the CTCR's executive director said, focused "not so much on specific questions about the service of women in the church—topics covered in other CTCR documents—but on the scriptural relationship of man and woman both within and outside of marriage and church-service contexts" (*Reporter*, Nov. 2008, p. 2); and
3. The December 2014 *CTCR Review of 2005 Task Force Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*, which noted several deficiencies in the 2005 "Guidelines" document, including the statement that the guidelines "do not directly or explicitly address the issue of the 'order of creation' and its relevance for issues relating to the service of women in the church. This was and is a major concern of those who have expressed dissent from 2004 Res. 3-08A and needs continued careful study and attention (a task to which the CTCR has explicitly committed itself)" (Executive Summary, p. 2); and

WHEREAS, The Synod is not in agreement about the role of women in the church and the practical application of the various resolutions of the Synod concerning women's roles; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Missouri District West Pastoral Conference express its desire that our Synod seek a God-pleasing resolution and lasting solution to the understanding of women's roles in the church; and be it further

Resolved, That the Missouri District West Pastoral Conference memorialize the Synod to do the following:

1. Rescind 2004 Res. 3-08A and anything based upon it, such as policies or administrative procedures.
2. Assign the CTCR to fulfill the mandate given it in 1995 Res. 3-06A.
3. Assign to the systematic theology departments of her two seminaries the task of giving the CTCR input pursuant to the above assignment, this time by addressing formal "open letters" to the CTCR and making these letters available to the entire Synod at the time when they are submitted to the CTCR.
4. Assign the CTCR to review critically all the recommendations in its 1994 report on *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* and their basis in the CTCR 1985 *Women in the Church* document in light of the dissenting opinion of 1994, the seminary department input mentioned above, the input of other concerned members of the Synod, and scholarly studies concerning relevant biblical passages (many aided by ancient literature databases) that have appeared since 1985.
5. Assign the CTCR to issue a report to the Synod on this study in which the CTCR answers the following questions:
 - a. In addition to the correction already issued by the CTCR in its *Authentein* document, does the CTCR wish to correct the following statement, or the biblical analysis underlying this statement, from its 1968 *Woman Suffrage in the Church* document: "To this point we would need to add the observation that some offices in the congregation implicitly expect the exercise of authority over others, including men. [Women h]olding such

offices might indeed be in violation of what has been called the order of creation or of preservation" (p. 10)?

(It should be noted that the CTCR has asserted, with respect to expressions of dissent from 2004 Res. 3-08A, "If the dissenters believe that *Scripture* clearly and definitively teaches that, due to the order of creation, women are forbidden to serve in certain humanly instituted offices in the church (even when these offices do not require them to carry out the distinctive functions of the pastoral office), then it is incumbent upon those dissenting to demonstrate where and how Scripture makes this clear. This, in the CTCR's judgment, the dissenters have not done" [*CTCR Response to Expressions of Dissent (2004–2006)*, 25–26, emphasis original].)

If the CTCR wishes to correct the above-cited statement from the 1968 document, why? If not, why not?

b. Does the CTCR recommend that the Synod in any way modify the following declarations from its 1969 Resolution 2-17? If so, why? If not, why not?

"2. The principles set forth in such [biblical] passages, we believe, prohibit holding any other kind of office or membership on boards or committees in the institutional structures of a congregation, only if this involves women in a violation of the order of creation."

(It should be noted that the CTCR stated in 1985: "The only stricture would have to do with anyone whose official functions would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office (e.g., elders, and possibly the chairman of the congregation)" [*Women in the Church*, 46].)

"4. We therefore conclude that the Synod itself and the congregations of the Synod are at liberty to alter their policies and practices in regard to women's involvement in the work of the church according to these declarations, provided the policy developed conforms to the general Scriptural principles that women neither hold the pastoral office nor exercise authority over men."

(It should be noted that the CTCR stated in 1985, with respect to 1 Tim. 2:11–15: "a careful review of this passage indicates that the terms 'teach' and 'exercise authority' parallel each other. They are intentionally linked. The kind of teaching referred to in the passage is tied to exercising authority. The authority forbidden to women here is that of the pastoral office" [*Women in the Church*, 35].)

c. What corrections might the CTCR offer concerning its reports issued after 1969, including *Women in the Church* (1985) and *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* (1994)?

(Note: On this entire subject, see "*The Service of Women in Congregational Offices, 1969 to 2007*," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly 82 [Fall, 2009]:147–69.)

West Pastors Conference, Missouri District; Carrollton Circuit Forum, Missouri District; Missouri District

5-26

To Give Greater Guidance and Direction re Service of Women in Congregational Offices

WHEREAS, The question of the proper role of the service of women in congregational offices has been under discussion and review in the Synod since at least 1969 (See *CTCR Review of 2005 Task Force Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices*, 2014, p. 2); and

WHEREAS, President Harrison requested the CTCR on Sept. 12, 2012, to “provide clarity and direction on the issue of women’s service in the church” including the question of “female presidents/chairs of congregations” (*CTCR Review*, p. 1); and

WHEREAS, The CTCR did release its review in December 2014 to the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Congregations continue to have difficulty in properly formulating constitutions and bylaws which reflect the practice of the Synod in this matter; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod give greater guidance and direction to the congregations of the Synod regarding the service of women in congregational offices, particularly concerning formulating proper language for governing documents.

Mount Olive
Milwaukee, WI

5-27

To State Women Have No Authority Over Men in Church Humanly Established Offices

WHEREAS, 2004 Res. 3-08A resolved “that women may serve in humanly established offices in the church as long as the functions of these offices do not make them eligible to carry out ‘official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office’”; and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture plainly states in 1 Timothy 2:12 that women are not permitted to exercise authority over a man: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention state, in accordance with Scripture, that women may serve only in humanly established offices in the church that do not exercise authority over men.

Zion
Chippewa Falls, WI

5-28

To Encourage Utilization of Women in Delivery of the Word

WHEREAS, Old and New Testament Scriptures are replete with examples of God delivering His message in a public way through women (Deborah, Huldah, Priscilla, Junia, etc.); and

WHEREAS, God chose to introduce the Word made flesh to the world through the birth of Jesus by the Virgin Mary; and

WHEREAS, Women are noted by John as the first witnesses and bearers of the message of Christ’s resurrection; therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod acknowledge the importance of women of faith in our congregations as bearers of God’s Good News; and be it further

Resolved, That with this acknowledgement congregations encourage women to participate with delivery of the Word; and be it finally

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention authorize the President of the Synod, with the approval of the Council of Presidents, to appoint five (5) representatives from the Council of Presidents, along with one (1) seminary representative from each seminary and at least five (5) laywomen and five (5) rostered women, to serve on a task force that would create literature and other publicity that would encourage the utilization of women in delivery of the Word, with

examples from the Holy Scriptures of the prophetesses, deaconesses, and female matriarchs and saints.

Village
Bronxville, NY

5-29

To Condemn Conscription of Women

WHEREAS, On January 24, 2013, the U.S. Department of Defense announced its intent to lift the nation’s exclusion of women from all remaining combat positions from which they have been previously barred, an exclusion upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, The women of the LCMS may be subject to registering for selective service and a possible draft, as the rationale provided by the U.S. Supreme Court in prohibiting this practice was the Department of Defense’s ban on women in combat; and

WHEREAS, The conscription of women, especially in view of their imminent inclusion into all combat positions in the U.S. Armed Forces, is not in accordance with God’s order of creation (Gen. 1–2; 1 Cor. 11), in which men are to be the self-sacrificial heads and protectors of women, laying down their lives for them as Christ laid down His life for His Church (Eph. 5:25), and showing honor to them (1 Pet. 3:7), which is further confirmed and testified to by the exclusion of women from combat duty and conscription throughout the Scriptures (Num. 1; Joshua 1:14; Deut. 20; Deut. 22; etc.); and

WHEREAS, At the 2013 LCMS convention, the Mercy floor committee intended to speak to the issue of the conscription of women in their original resolution, as was printed in *Today’s Business* (July 23, 2013): “*Resolved*, That the LCMS support those who have a religious and moral objection to women serving in ground combat positions and/or participating in the selective service system and being subject to a possible draft.” Yet the committee did not present the above phrase, “and/or participating in the selective service system and being subject to a possible draft,” because “Mercy committee members saw no need to address that issue at this time” (*Reporter Online*); and

WHEREAS, Since then (on December 3, 2015), the U.S. Department of Defense announced that all U.S. military combat positions are being opened up to women, and detailed legal analysis has already been undertaken by the Department of Defense in consultation with the Department of Justice concerning the legal implications of this change of policy in regard to the constitutionality of the application of the selective service system; and

WHEREAS, We would be negligent if we did not defend the women of the LCMS and prepare for the serious and imminent possibility of women being subjected to being required to participate in the selective service system and a possible draft; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS condemn the conscription of women, in particular by means of participation in the selective service system and a possible draft, as it is a confusion of God’s order of creation; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS support those who have a religious and moral objection to women participating in the selective service system and being subject to a possible draft.

St. Paul’s, Readlyn, IA; Immanuel, Readlyn, IA; Immanuel, Terra Haute, IN; Emmaus, St. Louis, MO; Immanuel, Tuscola, IL; Grace, San Mateo, CA; St. Luke’s, Wood Lake, MN; St. Paul’s, Union Grove, WI; Blessed Redeemer, Brandon, SD; High Plains Circuit, Wyoming District; Mt. Pleasant Circuit, Iowa District East; Central Jersey Circuit, New Jersey District; Our Savior, Westminster, MA;

Circuit 12, Iowa District East; Trinity, Clinton, MA; St. Paul's, Kewanee, IL; Grace, Seguin, TX; Central Jersey Circuit, New Jersey District; Board of Directors, Wyoming District; Board of Directors, Central Illinois District; Trinity, Leesville, LA; Immanuel, Roswell, NM; Winona Circuit, Minnesota South District; Trinity, Guttenberg, IA; Jacksonville Circuit, Central Illinois District; Kenosha Circuit, South Wisconsin District; Racine Circuit, South Wisconsin District; St. Paul's, Latimer, IA; Springfield East and West Circuits, Central Illinois District; Concordia, Springfield, IL; Good Shepherd, Sherman, IL; Concordia, Wausaw, IL; Holy Cross, Golden, IL; Board of Directors, Rocky Mountain District; Zion, Ellendale, ND; St. John, Culbertson, NE; Benton Circuit, Iowa District East; St. Paul, McGregor, IA; Grace, DeSoto, MO

5-30

To Consider Ramifications of Conscription of Women into Military Service

WHEREAS, At the 2013 Synod convention, the "Mercy" floor committee intended to speak to the issue of the conscription of women in their original resolution, as printed in *Today's Business* for July 23, 2013: "Resolved, That the LCMS support those who have a religious and moral objection to women serving in ground combat positions and/or participating in the selective service system and being subject to a possible draft," yet the committee did not present the phrase "and/or participating in the selective service system and being subject to a possible draft" because committee members saw no need to address that issue at that time (*Reporter Online*); and

WHEREAS, Since then, on December 3, 2015, the US Department of Defense announced that all US military combat positions are being opened up to women, and detailed legal analysis has already been undertaken by the Department of Defense in consultation with the Department of Justice concerning the legal implications of this change of policy in regards to the constitutionality of the application of the selective service toward women; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS consider the ramifications of the conscription of women, in particular, by means of participation in the selective service system and a possible draft, as it is an application of the order of creation and the doctrine of vocation; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS support those who have a conscientious objection to women participating in the selective service system and being subject to a possible draft.

Board of Directors
South Wisconsin District

5-31

To Condemn and Renounce Employment of Women in Military Combat

WHEREAS, On Dec. 3, 2015, the U.S. Department of Defense announced its lifting of our nation's 65-year-old ban against sending women into combat—an exclusion the Supreme Court upheld in 1981; and

WHEREAS, In 1992, a presidential commission reexamined the use of women in combat. It conducted hearings inviting theological input. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod did not contribute or attend. The final report found that no major American religious establishment had adopted a theological position or spoken clearly on this

issue. In 1993–94, the Secretary of Defense ordered the military services to permit women to compete for some combat assignments and to open some specialties formerly reserved to men. Regretfully, we in the LCMS must acknowledge: our silence wrongly implied consent to these changes which we did not intend and must extend no longer; and

WHEREAS, We recognize our nation's freedom, prosperity, and security as gracious gifts from God's generous hand. These lie beyond the achievement of human capabilities alone. Dependent upon His mercies, we dare not defy His will; and

WHEREAS, God ordered His creation of man and woman in a good relationship with Himself and one another that His order of redemption does not erase but confirms and fulfills. God designed woman as His vessel for bearing life (Gen. 3:20). To employ a woman as an instrument of death and destruction inverts His design; to ignore His order is sinful; and

WHEREAS, Advocates of women warriors often cite Judges 4 for support. In fact, this account is incomprehensible without the underlying presumption that men, not women, have the duty to go forth into combat. The Lord exposes the cowardice of Barak through Deborah and shames him by delivering the enemy leader into the hands of a woman, Jael. God sends neither woman into combat; and

WHEREAS, The inclusion of women into all combat positions in the U.S. Armed Forces is not in accordance with God's order of creation (Genesis 1–2; 1 Corinthians 11), in which men are to be the self-sacrificial heads and protectors of women, laying down their lives for them as Christ laid down His life for His Church (Eph. 5:25), and showing honor to them (1 Pet. 3:7), which is further confirmed and testified to by the exclusion of women from combat duty and conscription throughout the Scriptures (Numbers 1; Josh. 1:14; Deuteronomy 20; 22; etc.). So also, by extension, in society women are not to sacrifice themselves for men in combat; rather, men are to sacrifice themselves for women; and

WHEREAS, This includes a special and particular responsibility to guard, protect, and defend women, people of every nation and any faith should counsel and encourage men to obey their innate impulse and outward duty: put "women and children first." For men to employ women in their own physical defense and in killing can only be considered among the most profound abuses of women; and

WHEREAS, The spilling and shedding of human blood is far more than a "job" offering legal "employment." To escape condemnation as mercenary murder, the call to arms for the taking and risking of human lives must only be conducted as a moral enterprise against evil threats, toward just ends, by just means. Among the fundamental principles of "just war" is the need to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants; women have always been presumed to be the latter. America must not ignore this basic presumption, and dare not attempt to overrule it. To employ women in military combat is intrinsically immoral and barbaric; and

WHEREAS, The last Synod convention dismissed the question of women in combat as one that would not actualize and therefore took no action on the resolutions regarding the issue then presented; therefore be it

Resolved, That as pastors and congregations of the LCMS, we confess as sin our failure clearly and boldly to speak to this issue of women in combat. We repent. We seek now to state our clear theological position on this issue and sound the clear trumpet of God's warning (1 Cor. 14:8); and be it further

Resolved, That from Holy Scriptures we are convinced: God does not sanction and will not bless the purposeful exposure of women to any hostile environment that compromises His own created order,

good design, and high and holy callings. We hereby declare our conscientious objection to any policy or practice that considers women eligible for assignment into combat situations or conscription; and be it finally

Resolved, That to all who defy God's clearly expressed will in this matter, we declare His warning (Ezekiel 33): Hear the Word of the Lord and repent, lest you incur His condemnation, for on the final days you will face His judgment.

Jacksonville Circuit
Central Illinois District

5-32

To Protect Consciences of Women re Military Service

WHEREAS, On December 3, 2015, United States Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter opened all military occupations and positions to women, including those involving direct combat engagement; and

WHEREAS, On January 1, 2016, implementation of this policy began; and

WHEREAS, This policy was implemented despite significant division over the matter amongst the general American population, lawmakers, and the military itself; and

WHEREAS, The Marine Corps' request for a partial exemption from the order was denied; and

WHEREAS, The implementation of this policy would seem to require that women will eventually be required to register for selective service and a possible draft, as the primary rationale provided by the US Supreme Court in allowing women to be excluded from the draft was their ineligibility to serve in a combat capacity (*Rostker v. Goldberg*); and

WHEREAS, Christians are to be subject to governing authorities (Rom. 13; 1 Pet. 2) while remaining obedient to God whenever human authority seeks to require us to act contrary to our conscience-bound convictions regarding God's Word and will; and

WHEREAS, Christians differ on whether having women serve in combat is morally permissible, with some holding the opinion that having women serve in a combat capacity is a matter for the "left-hand kingdom" to address and therefore a matter in which they willingly obey and honor such a decision by the governing authorities; and

WHEREAS, Biblical objections to women being required to serve in the military in general or to serve in combat positions in particular have been voiced by many Christians, including members of the LCMS, based on scriptural concerns about the complementary yet ordered relationship between man and woman (Gen. 1–2); the requirement given to husbands, not wives, to love in a manner that emulates the sacrifice of Christ for His Bride, the Church (Eph. 5); and the doctrine of vocation (Prov. 31:10–31; Titus 2:3–5); and

WHEREAS, Lutheran Christians have a high regard for God's gifts of human reason and natural law, and take very seriously the many reason-based arguments that have been made (by both Christians and non-Christians) against women serving in combat positions (e.g., physical strength comparisons between men and women in general; other physical and biological differences between men and women; data-based concerns about mixed-gender troop performance under combat conditions, etc.); and

WHEREAS, Women of the LCMS, as well as other Christian women who serve in the military, may be required to serve in combat units even when they may conscientiously oppose such service; and

WHEREAS, LCMS and other Christian women who seek to serve their country in the military may similarly feel required to forego such service because of conscientious objections to serving in a combat capacity; and

WHEREAS, In the 2013 convention, the Synod asked the CTCR to study the issue of employing women in combat and to issue a statement on this matter for consideration at the 2016 convention (Res. 2-12A); and

WHEREAS, The CTCR has devoted considerable time, effort, and discussion to this assignment in the past triennium, including the preparation of a detailed draft outline which offers a framework for addressing key facets of this issue; and

WHEREAS, The CTCR (partly due to the unforeseen need to identify a new drafter in early 2015) will not be able to bring its work on this assignment to completion before the 2016 convention; therefore be it

Resolved, That as it continues its work on this assignment and seeks to bring it to completion, the CTCR strongly supports the responsibility and necessity for men and women to act according to conscience in this matter while respecting the conscience of others (Rom. 14:2–3, 13–23; 1 Cor. 10:29; 1 Tim. 1:5; Heb. 13:18); and be it further

Resolved, That there is biblical and theological warrant for a woman in the LCMS to conscientiously object (1) to a woman's service in the military in general or (2) to a woman in the military being required to serve in a combat capacity or (3) to being required to register for military service; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage lawmakers to provide protection in this matter for Lutherans and other Christian women to conscientiously object when they determine (1) that they cannot serve in the military or (2) that they cannot serve in good conscience in a combat capacity or (3) that they cannot in good conscience register for military service (see also CTCR, *Civil Obedience and Disobedience* [1966]); and be it finally

Resolved, That the CTCR continue its study of this question and prepare a full report or study document for prayerful consideration by the Synod as a whole.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations

5-33

To Reaffirm Six-Day Creation

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach that God is the Creator of all that exists and is therefore the author (Acts 3:15) and giver of life (Nicene Creed, Third Article); and

WHEREAS, Genesis 1 details the creation of the world by God in six days, each of which consists of 24 hours; and

WHEREAS, This interpretation is explicitly corroborated by other passages of Scripture such as Exodus 20:8–11; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has previously and consistently taught and affirmed this position; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District in convention reaffirm the literal six-day creation as revealed in Genesis; and be it further

Resolved, That the English District memorialize the Synod to reaffirm her position during the 2016 convention concerning the literal six-day creation as it is revealed in Genesis.

English District
Farmington, MI

FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

6. Seminaries

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R56, R57, R58

OVERTURES

6-01

To Reaffirm in Practice Biblical Qualifications for Office of the Holy Ministry

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture clearly teaches that marriage is a life-long union between one man and one woman (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2; Matt. 5:32; Luke 16:18); and

WHEREAS, St. Paul clearly states that the Christian minister must be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6), as Christ is the husband of one bride, the Church; and

WHEREAS, It has become the practice in our Synod that our seminaries admit, certify, and place candidates who are divorced and remarried while the first wife is still living; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District in convention memorialize the LCMS convention to reaffirm the biblical qualifications for pastors by forbidding admission to the seminary and certification, placement, calling, and ordination of candidates who are the husbands of more than one wife according to the scriptural understanding of marriage.

English District
Farmington, MI

6-02

To No Longer Allow or Compel Vicars to Appear to Rightly Administer the Sacrament

WHEREAS, Christ has publicly instituted within His fellowship (*koinonia*) of believers the Office of the Holy Ministry, whereby He delivers with absolute certainty His gifts of the forgiveness of sins and so also life and salvation through His Spirit-empowered Word and Sacraments, whereby He works to create in sinners both repentance from sin and faith in Christ crucified for sinners; and

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran Confessions state: “Nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call” (*rite vocatus*) (AC XIV, Tappert); and

WHEREAS, The historical understanding that *rite vocatus* includes the whole process of *examination*, *call*, and *ordination*, and that none of these three aspects is negotiable or unnecessary, even though they may be implemented in various ways, was affirmed by the report of the Synod’s task force studying the use of SMP pastors and licensed lay deacons in response to 2013 Resolution 4-06A; and

WHEREAS, The original intent of using vicars in the LCMS was to help train up and examine laymen before they were extended a regular call into the Office of the Holy Ministry but not to use them as though they already were rightly called ministers; and

WHEREAS, During the past 60 years or so, the practice has begun of misusing some vicars by sending them to congregations in order to satisfy the desire of congregations to rightly receive the Sacrament of the Altar, which has introduced confusion regarding the nature of the Office of the Holy Ministry and has introduced uncertainty in the reception of Christ’s gifts through the institution of the Office of the Holy Ministry; and, in some cases, vicars have even been coerced into

apparently consecrating the Sacrament of the Altar against their consciences under threat of failing their vicarages; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has never recognized vicars as men who have received a regular call (*rite vocatus*) to consecrate the Sacrament and conduct all the duties (including hearing confession and pronouncing holy absolution under the confessional seal) that are associated with helping prepare communicants to rightly receive the Lord’s body and blood to their benefit and not to their harm and judgment; and

WHEREAS, The 2011 convention of our sister synod, Lutheran Church–Canada (founded 1988), with whom we share full altar and pulpit fellowship and mutually share and study documents produced by each others’ commissions on theology and church relations, has set a good and faithful example by adopting as amended Resolution 11.1.10 as a statement for “reference and guidance,” which concludes: “Since historically the celebration of Holy Communion publicly has been a unique function of the Office of the Holy Ministry, and since a vicar is a [layman] in training for the Office of the Holy Ministry and not a pastor, and since no incidence of an ‘emergency’ can be suggested in which the historical practice of the Church should be abrogated, therefore, vicars should not be allowed to celebrate Holy Communion other than as an assistant to the presiding pastor who alone has the right by means of his call and ordination to speak the Words of Institution ...”; therefore be it

Resolved, That LCMS vicars who do not have a regular call no longer be allowed or compelled to appear as though they are rightly administering the Sacrament of the Altar.

Pilgrim, Kilgore, TX; Grace, Paris, TX; Immanuel, Terre Haute, IN

6-03

To Study Development of More Economically Viable Models of Pastoral Formation

WHEREAS, The Lord admonishes us to be good stewards of all the resources He blesses us with; and

WHEREAS, Total enrollment in our seminaries is declining, and the costs to maintain and run seminaries are not declining; and

WHEREAS, Christianity in the United States is in decline, and there is a need for more laborers in the harvest; and

WHEREAS, Students may not be attending the seminary due to the expense related to their education; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2015 convention of the Pacific Southwest District memorialize the 2016 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to direct the President of the Synod to appoint a task force to evaluate the pastoral formation processes of the Synod and develop recommendations that encourage more men to go into the ministry through more economically viable models.

Pacific Southwest District

6-04

To Require Use of Synod Hymnals at Synod Seminaries and Universities

WHEREAS, Constitution Article VI 4 states as a condition of membership: “Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school”; and

WHEREAS, LCMS seminaries and universities serve the Synod by teaching and giving faithful examples to their students and communities; and

WHEREAS, Constitution Article III 7 states as an objective of Synod: “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”; therefore be it

Resolved, That LCMS seminaries and universities be required to make exclusive use of our Synod’s hymnal, *Lutheran Service Book*, in their worship services, prayer offices, public devotions, and the like—for both orders of service and corporate singing; and be it further

Resolved, That special musical arrangements conform to our common profession of faith, which is to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it finally

Resolved, That each seminary be required to train their seminarians to lead congregations pastorally to the exclusive use of our Synod hymnals as their membership in the Synod requires.

Our Savior
Cheyenne, WY

6-05

To Provide Certified Financial Planning for Prospective Seminary Students

WHEREAS, Student loan debt for pastors is a significant problem in the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, Most new graduates begin their ministry in smaller congregations, making it difficult to pay back student loans; and

WHEREAS, A majority of our congregations are in rural areas, which are themselves facing population declines and therefore decreasing membership and dwindling funds; and

WHEREAS, We pray that our Lord would send faithful laborers into the harvest, and we also take seriously the command of our Lord that “the worker is worthy of his wage” (1 Tim. 5:18); therefore be it

Resolved, That LCMS seminaries retain the services of a certified financial planner (CFP) to contract with any interested prospective student, subject to the following conditions:

1. The CFP will be contracted by but independent of the seminary.
2. The CFP will provide as realistic a picture as possible of both the short- and long-term financial prospects for any interested prospective student, taking into account at least, but not exclusively, the incoming financial situation of the student, potential student debt load, tuition and housing costs, potential post-seminary salary, etc.
3. The cost of the CFP at each seminary will be borne equally by the seminary and the national Synod, with the seminary and the Synod each encouraged to seek grants for their portion of the cost.
4. This will be instituted no later than the start of the 2017 school year.

High Plains Circuit
Wyoming District

6-06

To Fraternally Admonish Seminaries to Give Due Weight to Lodge Membership Issue

WHEREAS, Since the founding of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, lodges have been condemned as in opposition to the church’s faith; and

WHEREAS, This condemnation has been repeatedly reconfirmed by numerous Synod resolutions, in the dogmatic and pastoral theology texts of the LCMS, and through many other means; and

WHEREAS, Scripture admonishes the pastors to be well equipped and ever-vigilant against error within the church; and

WHEREAS, Despite the decreased attention given, lodges still remain prominent organizations, and lodge membership has not ceased to be a significant issue in our own congregations; and

WHEREAS, Lodge membership has never ceased to be a matter barring fellowship among various Lutheran bodies in the United States; therefore be it

Resolved, That with full recognition of the numerous things that must be taught to future pastors, the LCMS fraternally admonish her seminaries to give the issue of lodge membership due weight as a still-present issue of pastoral care and doctrinal fidelity in their pastoral theology courses and other classes.

Jacksonville Circuit
Central Illinois District

6-07

To Create a Seminary Education Futures Task Force

WHEREAS, As Christians we are encouraged to be good stewards of our talents to the glory of God and the furthering of His Kingdom (Matt. 25; 1 Pet. 4:10); and

WHEREAS, The decline of enrollment at our two seminaries continues to be a concern; and

WHEREAS, We live in a changing academic and educational climate which makes it possible to consider a wide variety of ways to accomplish seminary education; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention create a task force to study this issue and develop a plan to submit to the 2019 Synod convention.

Florida-Georgia District

6-08

To Develop MDiv Degree Program Online Options

WHEREAS, We are commanded by God to go and make disciples everywhere; and

WHEREAS, There exists a need to provide sound theological training at an affordable cost to men who have a sense of pastoral vocation; and

WHEREAS, There is a need for trained pastors to evangelize the ever-increasing number of unchurched and dechurched people; and

WHEREAS, Many churches often cannot afford to pay the salary expected by graduates of our existing on-campus seminary education programs because of the student loans many have incurred to attend those seminaries; and

WHEREAS, While the cost to attend either of the Synod’s two existing seminaries, coupled with the necessity to quit employment in order to relocate to either St. Louis or Fort Wayne to engage in study on campus, plus the moving expenses, housing costs, and family sustenance expenses incurred in on-campus education programs make seminary education cost prohibitive for many potential pastoral candidates; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2015 convention of the Pacific Southwest District memorialize the Synod’s seminaries to offer online options

toward earning an MDiv degree to allow for the further development of qualified ministers for God's church in the LCMS.

Pacific Southwest District

6-09

To Develop Worship Practice Curriculum at Seminaries

WHEREAS, God's Holy Scripture proclaims very clearly that there is orthodox worship, which means that there must also be unorthodox worship, John 4:19–24: "The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the *true* worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him *must* worship in spirit and truth.' " (NKJV, *emphasis added*); and

WHEREAS, God's Holy Scripture also proclaims very clearly His entire plan of salvation (Gen. 1:31; 1:27; Lev. 19:1–2; Eph. 4:24; Gen. 2:16–17; 3:1–7; James 1:13–15; 1 John 3:8; Gen. 3:8, 9–12; Rom. 3:10–18, 22–23, 19–20; John 3:14–18; Rom. 5:8–11; Eph. 2:8–10; Rom. 4:16; Gen. 3:15; John 1:12–13; 6:44; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:17; 11:6; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:4–5; Titus 3:4–7; Heb. 4:12; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:22–23) and through His doctrinal truth He not only reveals His theology of the cross but clearly establishes boundaries between orthodox worship ("in spirit and truth") and heterodox worship (that which is practiced either not "in spirit" nor "truth," or both), for just as He brings us to pray in the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer that His doctrinal truth should be taught in its truth and purity, He thus brings us to desire orthodoxy for the hallowing of His name among us; and

WHEREAS, All worship should be evaluated so as to confirm that it is orthodox, thus supporting God's theology of the cross—namely, utilizing (and fostering) God's Law and Gospel in order to create and sustain repentance and belief (also known as the dying and rising of believers through Christ crucified and risen); and

WHEREAS, All worship should be evaluated so as to also confirm that it isn't heterodox, supporting the theology of glory—namely, utilizing (and fostering) Arminian theology (or any other false theology) along with "revivalistic" tactics which aim excitement toward the base, natural will of man (the old man), just as Charles Finney (an Arminian) stated:

God has found it necessary to take advantage of the excitability there is in mankind, to produce powerful excitements among them, before He can lead them to obey.

and

WHEREAS, The practice of heterodox worship is a serious attack on the truth and proper teaching of God's Word and His plan of salvation (specifically His theology of the cross); and

WHEREAS, Heterodox worship undoubtedly conveys a theology (namely, Arminian) which teaches believers (and potential believers) to trust their excitement, experience, feelings, or emotions, generated by "revivalistic" tactics, thus replacing true repentant faith in the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, Both orthodox and heterodox worship can be evaluated according to the components that make up their practice—namely, to see whether those components either aim to kill through God's Law

and make alive through God's Gospel (orthodoxy) or aim to "excite" and bring the "experience," "feelings," or "emotions" to be the most important focus, thus replacing repentant faith in the Gospel (heterodoxy); and

WHEREAS, Not doing anything about worship practice that conveys Arminian theology (or any other false theology) does not hallow God's name but profanes His name among us and allows the surrendering of our neighbor's souls to a misunderstanding of God's Holy Scriptures; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention direct the professors that teach worship practice at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, to discuss how worship practice is taught at each school—and come to agreement on teaching the same understanding regarding worship practice—officially entitling their teachings that are true to God's theology of the cross as the "Worship Practice Curriculum," so that the errant worship practices that promote the false teaching of God's Word (namely, Arminian theology or "revivalistic" Church Growth tactics) be avoided; and be it further

Resolved, That the "Worship Practice Curriculum" that is eventually agreed upon by the professors that teach worship practice at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, be reported to the 2019 LCMS convention, with the intent of being adopted; and be it finally

Resolved, That the 2019 LCMS convention, upon the adoption of the "Worship Practice Curriculum," then direct Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, to carry out the agreed "Worship Practice Curriculum," ensuring that God's Word is properly reflected through orthodox worship practice, and being assured of future congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod not conducting errant worship practices that promote the false teaching of God's Word (namely, a theology of glory, or an Arminian theology or "revivalistic" Church Growth tactics).

Grace
San Mateo, CA

6-10

To Encourage Men to Study for Office of Holy Ministry

WHEREAS, In Luke 10:2, Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Pray therefore earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest"; and

WHEREAS, The number of men preparing for the Office of the Holy Ministry in residential programs at the seminaries has significantly declined over the past 8 years; and

WHEREAS, The total number of candidates graduating from both seminaries has been less than the number of calling congregations seeking new graduates for the past several years; and

WHEREAS, Approximately one-third of LCMS pastors are at or near retirement age; and

WHEREAS, There are multiple factors which could inhibit men from entering or completing seminary preparation, including significant student debt (from an average of \$50,000 and sometimes reaching over \$100,000), rising healthcare and benefit costs, concern about placement, traditionally low starting salaries, etc.; therefore be it

Resolved, That pastors and congregations encourage male youth and men to consider studying for the Office of the Holy Ministry; And be it further

Resolved, That congregations and individuals consider providing financial support to reduce the burden of costs to attend a seminary (e.g., a budget line item or special offerings); And be it further

Resolved, That the Mid-South District and the Synod shall set as a high priority the preparation and financial support of men for the Office of the Holy Ministry; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Mid-South District convention, memorialize the Synod with this resolution as an overture to the 2016 Synod convention.

Mid-South District

6-11

To Continue and Strengthen Specific Ministry Pastor Program and All Programs Leading to Ordination and Admission to Roster

WHEREAS, The 2013 LCMS convention adopted by a vote of 803–151 a resolution entitled “To Continue and Strengthen the Specific Ministry Pastor Program”; and

WHEREAS, The Atlantic District has continued to be blessed by the addition of specific ministry pastor (SMP) ordained pastors and vicars in the years since 2013; and

WHEREAS, The Atlantic District ministerium (ordained pastors roster) has also been blessed by the addition of pastors graduating from the residential programs of our seminaries; and

WHEREAS, The EIIT, alternate route, and colloquy programs of the LCMS have been an abundant blessing to the Atlantic District through additions to our pastoral roster; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Atlantic District in convention affirm its support of the SMP program; and be it further

Resolved, That men in appropriate circumstances continue to be encouraged to enter the SMP program; and be it further

Resolved, That the Atlantic District memorialize the LCMS in convention to retain the SMP program; and be it further

Resolved, That in order to maximize and strengthen the gifts of those SMP pastors in ordained ministry, the LCMS develop accessible ways for SMP pastors to enter the “general pastor” roster; and be it finally

Resolved, That recruitment efforts for men to enter the Holy Ministry through residential, specific ministry, and other programs be redoubled in the Atlantic District for the sake of the ministry of the Gospel among us.

Atlantic District

6-12

To Revise the Specific Ministry Pastor Program

WHEREAS, The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program is a distance-based, specialized program of theological education at both seminaries in which students are ordained after the first two years of the program and then are required to take two more years of instruction; and

WHEREAS, The warning is given in Scripture not to be hasty in the laying on of hands for the pastoral ministry (1 Tim. 5:22); and

WHEREAS, The Rev. C. F. W. Walther writes in his *Pastoral Theology*:

To the question: “Can those who, in the examination, are found not to be equipped with the knowledge of the articles of faith and of the holy Scripture which is necessary and sufficient for the holy office, nevertheless be ordained and admitted to the holy office, but with the condition that they make the sacred promise to be diligent and careful in learning?” the same [Brochmand] answers: “Not at all. For first, Paul does not permit someone to be entrusted with the holy office who is not qualified to teach and powerful to stop the mouths of those who contradict the truth (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9). Second, the Spirit of God explicitly reminds that one who could lay hands on an insufficiently qualified person would be making himself a participant in the sins of another (1 Tim. 5:22). Third, experience testifies only too abundantly that those who are admitted to the holy office without education remain in their uneducated condition even if they have promised diligence in learning. Fourth, how could we answer God if many of the listeners would be lost before the pastor learned what he should impress upon others (Ezek. 33:1ff.)” (*System. univers. th.*, Loc. 30, c. 3, Tom. II, fol. 372, 375). (Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, Drickamer translation, pp. 46–47);

therefore be it

Resolved, That the Mid-South District memorialize the 2016 Synod convention to revise the Specific Ministry Pastor program by requiring all courses and instruction to be completed prior to ordination.

Mid-South District

6-13

To Affirm Support for Specific Ministry Pastor Program

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 2.13.1 defines the “specific ministry pastor” as adopted by the Synod and seminaries; and

WHEREAS, The Synod and seminaries have seen great benefit from the Specific Ministry Pastor program since its inception; and

WHEREAS, The need continues to increase for pastoral candidates to be trained and utilized in specific ministry settings; and

WHEREAS, The specific ministry pastor training program serves as a great model to refine and expand online and distance training to prepare a wider range of pastoral candidates for service in God’s church; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Pacific Southwest District acting in convention affirm our support of the Specific Ministry Pastor program; and be it further

Resolved, That the Pacific Southwest District acting in convention memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention and encourage the Synod and our seminaries to further develop this training method for the sake of our clergy and the benefit of God’s church.

Pacific Southwest District

6-14

To Encourage Use of Existing Training Programs for Pastoral Ministry in Immigrant and Challenging Ministry Settings

WHEREAS, Throughout its history, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has established various training and degree programs to prepare pastors for service in new ministry settings. Often this has been in response to outreach opportunities as well as to provide pastors in small economically distressed congregations, small isolated congregations, and congregations that present unique demographic challenges. Among these routes have been numerous district training programs for lay deacons, Distance Education Leading to Ordination

(DELTO, no longer in operation), the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, the Center for Hispanic Studies (formerly the Hispanic Institute of Theology), the Cross-Cultural Ministry Center, and various other programs; and

WHEREAS, As congregations of the LCMS continue to navigate the rapidly changing shifts in our society, it will be necessary for the Synod to utilize these and other modes of preparing pastors that supplement its residential pastoral formation programs at both seminaries; therefore be it

Resolved, That the congregations and districts of the LCMS be commended for their desire to provide Word and Sacrament ministry for all the people of God and for Gospel outreach; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS continue its long-standing commitment to a well-trained clergy, formed through its seminaries; and be it further

Resolved, That districts and congregations in cross-cultural settings and in challenging demographic circumstances be encouraged to utilize, when appropriate, the various programs for forming pastors in the Synod, such as the Specific Ministry Pastor program, the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, the Center for Hispanic Studies, the Cross-Cultural Ministry Center, and various other programs of the seminaries which focus on training pastors for these situations; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod ensure that financial constraints do not prevent any eligible candidate from participating in these programs; and be it further

Resolved, That the current district lay training programs continue to train laymen and women to assist congregations with outreach in our increasingly complex world; and be it further

Resolved, That these district programs be coordinated with the seminaries and, as circumstances permit, lead to further training for the pastoral ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That a program similar to the Global Seminaries Initiative be created to fund recent immigrant US residents for advanced theological studies at LCMS seminaries; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod thank the Res. 4-06A Task Force for its balanced and forward-looking recommendations, and that their report be consulted for further guidance in the implementation of this resolution.

Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN; Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO

6-15

To Commend SMP Program and Affirm Original Design

WHEREAS, The 2007 convention established the SMP program (Res. 5-01B) as a theologically responsible way to provide pastoral education for meeting the ministry challenges and mission opportunities of the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, Res. 5-01B articulated both the needs for church planters and missionaries and for regularizing all who provide Word and Sacrament ministry in congregations of the LCMS, including those licensed for such following the 1989 convention; and

WHEREAS, Those who teach publicly in the church and administer the sacraments should be properly called, as taught in Augsburg Confession Art. XIV; and

WHEREAS, Res. 5-01B was presented after a process of collaboration that brought together representatives of the needs of the field with the entities of the Synod to whom leadership for pastoral

education and certification is entrusted, was reviewed by the CTCR and the CCM, and was further supported by the (former) Board for Pastoral Education, the faculties of both seminaries, and the Council of Presidents, and then passed by a 76 percent vote in favor of the resolution; and

WHEREAS, The SMP curriculum has proven to be effective in providing basic pastoral knowledge and attitudes, including confessional subscription and the practical application of preaching, teaching, worship, pastoral care in administering the Lord's Supper, and in addressing the practice of specific ministry through required field seminars; and

WHEREAS, This program provides a helpful combination of the strengths of both distance and residential education through a rigorous use of distance education course design and pedagogy along with regular residential seminars and courses taught in an intensive mode on campus; and

WHEREAS, This program has been evaluated, assessed, and reviewed, both according to the provisions of Res. 5-01B, which required a report at least nine months before the 2010 convention, as well as through annual reports and several white papers from the Office of Pastoral Education of the LCMS in 2012 and 2013; and

WHEREAS, The programs of both seminaries allow for and encourage the use of the SMP curriculum and credits as applicable toward a Master of Arts degree, Alternate Route certification, or Master of Divinity degree,

WHEREAS, Students, mentors, ecclesiastical supervisors, and the congregations served by SMP vicars and pastors attest to the quality, theological soundness, and effective ministry provided by these men; and

WHEREAS, Provisions are in place and are being carefully followed for the appropriate restrictions and ongoing supervision, as well as continuing education, of such specific ministry pastors as originally prescribed by Res. 5-01B; and

WHEREAS, A procedure of monitoring, oversight, and review by the Specific Ministry Pastor Committee has been established and followed; and

WHEREAS, The candidate review leading to certification, call, and ordination at the point originally designed within the program has proven to be effective in providing pastoral ministry from within the office (AC XIV) with integrity consistent with our confessional commitment; therefore be it

Resolved, To commend our district presidents and seminaries for integrity and responsibility in the development, initiation, and ongoing assessment of the SMP program; and be it further

Resolved, To continue to support and utilize the SMP program as originally designed as an effective and theologically responsible way of meeting pastoral ministry needs of the contemporary context; and be it further

Resolved, To retain the presentation of candidates for certification, call, and ordination as originally designed; that is, after completing at least two years of supervised vicarage, courses in the Lutheran Confessions and Lutheran theology and practice, and after certification interviews by the faculty, and after a call has been issued by the congregation; and be it further

Resolved, To provide Synod funding for both student and program assessment to continue to gather evaluative data of the SMP program; and be it finally

Resolved, To address the contemporary needs of pastoral ministry by engaging the various means God has given to His Church for the raising up of pastors and missionaries, including the review

and assessment of all theological education programs to increase the strengths and improve the weaknesses also of our traditional models.

Concordia Seminary Faculty
St. Louis, MO

6-16

To Upgrade and Limit SMP Program

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture sets high standards for the theological aptitude of pastors, that they be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2) and “able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9), and that “not many of you should become teachers, my brothers” (James 3:1); and

WHEREAS, The curriculum and standards for the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program are significantly lower than they are for the MDiv program at our two residential seminaries; and

WHEREAS, A more thoroughly trained pastor ought to be sought, if at all possible; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod President and the two seminaries work together to upgrade the curriculum and standards of the Specific Ministry Pastor program, bringing them more in line with the curriculum and standards of the residential seminaries, including the requirement of ability in New Testament Greek; and be it further

Resolved, That admission to the SMP program be limited to cases only where a more thoroughly trained pastor would not be available, and thus not be open to congregations that already have a pastor.

St. Matthew
Bonne Terre, MO

7. University Education

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R2.2, R10, R15, R56, R57, R58, R63

OVERTURES

7-01

To Adopt Lutheran Identity Statement for CUS Institutions as Prepared by CUS Presidents

WHEREAS, The Synod is blessed with university leadership that seeks to reflect the confession and practice of the church; and

WHEREAS, The presidents of the Concordia University System (CUS) have endorsed an identity statement and its protocols as a means to demonstrate their support for the Christian teaching and Lutheran confession and practice of the church:

Lutheran Identity Standards for CUS Institutions

As educational institutions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System confess the faith of the Church. The Concordias uphold the teachings of sacred Scripture and its 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 art and science.”

Accordingly, the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System affirm and promise to uphold these identity standards:

1. Identity statements

The institution’s mission statement (and/or vision statement) clearly identifies it as an LCMS institution, as do the institution’s primary print and electronic publications.

2. Governing board

All of the institution’s regents are active members in good standing of LCMS congregations (Bylaw 3.10.5.2–4).

3. Senior leadership

The president and the senior leaders over academics, student life, admissions, and athletics are active members in good standing of LCMS congregations, and all faithfully participate in worship and religious activities on campus and in their local congregations.

4. Faculty

Each tenure track or continuing-level faculty search is given optimal exposure among members of congregations of the LCMS to identify faculty who are qualified in their respective academic disciplines 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 (cf. Bylaw 3.10.5.6.2). The majority of the full-time faculty are members of

LCMS congregations. In cases where this standard is not met, the institution will develop a plan to reach this minimum standard and submit it to the CUS. The institution has an ongoing faculty and staff development program required of all faculty, senior administrators, and senior staff members that clearly explains the tenets of LCMS higher education and what it means to be a faculty, administrator, or staff member at a CUS institution. Adjunct or part-time faculty members engage in a similar faculty development program that likewise explains the fundamental tenets of LCMS higher education and what it means to be a part-time faculty member at an LCMS institution.

5. Theology faculty

All theology faculty (full-time and part-time) are active members in good standing of LCMS congregations and fully affirm the theological confession of the LCMS. As the LCMS Bylaws indicate, all full-time theology faculty receive prior approval from the CUS Board of Directors before being appointed or called (Bylaw 3.6.6.1).

6. Academic freedom and responsibility

All full-time faculty acknowledge their acceptance of the CUS statement of Academic Freedom and Responsibilities. All faculty, both full- and part-time, pledge to perform their duties in harmony with Scripture, the Confessions, and the Synod’s doctrinal statements (Bylaw 3.10.5.6.2).

7. Faith and learning

In accordance with the doctrine of the two kingdoms, all faculty strive to faithfully bring Lutheran theology into interaction with their various academic disciplines while respecting the integrity of those disciplines. Likewise, in other campus arenas, faculty, staff, and administrators will seek to apply Lutheran theology within their campus vocations.

8. Required theology courses

The institution requires two to three theology courses for an undergraduate degree, typically in Old Testament, New Testament, and Christian doctrine. Because these courses are directly related to the theological identity of CUS institutions and to the identity formation of graduates, these theology courses will normally be taken at a CUS institution. Exceptions to this will be approved by the institution’s called theological faculty.

9. Preparation of church workers

The institution provides resources to recruit, form, nurture, and place students preparing for professional church work in the LCMS (e.g., pre-seminary, pre-deaconess, deaconess, Lutheran teachers, DCEs, DCOs, DPMs). Specific programs vary by campus.

10. Campus ministry

The institution offers regular opportunities for worship that reflect the confession of the church. Faculty, staff, and students are strongly encouraged to participate in these services. The institution calls a campus pastor or chaplain, who is a minister of religion—ordained of the LCMS, who oversees the worship life of the community, organizes opportunities for Christian service and witness, and provides pastoral care for students.

and

WHEREAS, Such commitment by the presidents is distinctive and, by God’s grace, will recommend their institutions not only to members of the church but also to those that are seeking such a full and transparent commitment to the integration of the finest in university education with the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, While some have noted the drift of colleges and universities away from the churches that gave birth to them, the Synod can give thanks for such a clear and forthright expression of solidarity with the church; and

WHEREAS, Pastors, congregations, and parents are urged to support these faithful presidents and send students as well as financial assistance so that their mission as institutions of the Synod might flourish and display the truth that all true knowledge and learning is rightly ordered in relation to God’s revelation in Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, It is appropriate that the Synod in convention support the faithful witness of the CUS institutions by adopting the Lutheran Identity Standards prepared by the institution presidents; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention adopt the Lutheran Identity Standards set forth above; and be it further

Resolved, That as contemplated by the standards, each institution will submit an annual assessment of its institutional commitment to Lutheran identity by submitting a written report to the CUS Board of Directors describing, with evidence, how the institution meets the ten Lutheran identity standards, on or prior to December 1 of each year beginning December 1, 2016, which report shall be submitted by each respective board of regents and shared with the respective campus community. Additionally, the CUS board shall use this information to report to the Synod in convention the progress made toward achieving the goals of the statement.

Board of Regents
Concordia University Chicago

7-02

To Encourage Continued Faithful Witness by Concordia University System

WHEREAS, The Synod declared in 2013 that the “biblical position as expressed and affirmed by the Synod on key issues such as creation and evolution, sanctity of life, and human sexuality and marriage is under assault by the world, and there is particular pressure for students and institutions [of higher education] to conform to a sinful world-view” (2013 Res. 5-01A); and

WHEREAS, Still more serious is the pressure to be scandalized by the particularity of our Lord Jesus Christ and His unique redeeming work and the biblical teaching that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12); and

WHEREAS, In the United States none of these pressures have abated since the Synod’s last convention, but at least in part have grown stronger; and

WHEREAS, Those who do not row against a prevailing current will find themselves swept downstream with it; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Carrollton Circuit Forum urge the Synod to state in the strongest terms its expectation that all of its colleges and universities vigorously champion and proclaim these and other currently controverted aspects of biblical and Lutheran identity in as many ways as possible.

Carrollton Circuit Forum
Missouri District

7-03

To Retain Current Structure of Boards of Regents of Concordia University System

WHEREAS, The universities and colleges of our Synod continue to be blessed by God and are growing in their enrollment of students and faculty; and

WHEREAS, The universities and colleges of our Synod which are located throughout our Synod can best understand the unique opportunities and challenges that they face in their locations; and

WHEREAS, The 2007 Synod convention carefully considered the composition of the boards of regents of its colleges and universities and adopted their current composition (Res. 5-04); and

WHEREAS, The qualifications for serving on boards of regents are spelled out carefully in the Bylaws of the Synod (3.10.5.2); and

WHEREAS, All members of boards of regents are to be members of congregations of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The maximum number of members of a board of regents is 17, with many of those members to be elected by the district and Synod conventions (4 elected by national conventions, 4 elected by district conventions, plus the president of the district in which the institution resides); and

WHEREAS, The district president serving as a voting member of the board of regents is charged to represent the Synod in his district (Bylaw 4.4.2); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Texas District in convention give thanks for the service of those who are serving the church on the various boards of regents of our colleges and universities, especially Concordia University Texas; and be it further

Resolved, That the Texas District memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to give thanks for the service of those who are serving the church on the various boards of regents of our colleges and universities; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Texas District memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to retain the current Bylaws governing the election and responsibilities of the boards of regents of our colleges and universities.

Texas District

7-04

To Amend Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 Election Process for College/University Presidents

WHEREAS, The election of a president of a Concordia University System (CUS) institution now happens at a board of regents meeting of the given institution, using the short list approved by the prior-approval panel (composed of the Synod President, the district president serving on the institution’s board of regents, and the chair of the CUS Board of Directors); and

WHEREAS, Current Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 (d) (2) provides that the panel may choose to remove names from the list but only with a two-thirds majority vote; and

WHEREAS, When these votes come from the Synod President and the chair of the CUS board, it removes the process from the local and regional constituents of each CUS school; and

WHEREAS, The local and regional constituents of each CUS school are highly invested in the direction and future of the CUS school and involved in support and teamwork of the school’s leadership; and

WHEREAS, The local influence and voice of the students (and their LCMS families) attending each school is essential; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 (d) (2) be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

...

(2) The prior-approval panel shall meet to consider the short list submitted by the board of regents. The panel may choose to remove names from the list, but only ~~with a two-thirds majority~~ by a unanimous vote.

...

Trinity, Utica, MI; Immanuel, Grand Rapids, MI;

California-Nevada-Hawaii District; Michigan District; Board of Directors, Michigan District; St. Luke, Haslett, MI; First Trinity, Tonawanda, NY; Salem, Tomball, TX; Salem, Buffalo, NY; First, Hanford, CA; Redeemer, Fresno, CA; King of Kings, Round Rock, TX; Bethany, Menlo Park, CA; Board of Directors, Nebraska District

7-05

To Effect Consistency in Board of Regents Member Appointments

WHEREAS, The boards of regents of the Synod's seminaries may have appointed, not elected, members and the boards of regents of the Synod's colleges and universities must each have at least four and as many as eight appointed members; and

WHEREAS, The members appointed to seminary boards are appointed by vote of the elected members of the board (Bylaw 3.10.4.2 4), while members of the college/university boards are appointed by both the elected and the appointed members of the board (Bylaw 3.10.5.2 [3]); and

WHEREAS, The method of appointment for college/university boards has the effect of making these boards in part self-perpetuating, even to the extent where appointed board members are able to vote to reappoint themselves; and

WHEREAS, The Synod which owns the colleges/universities no less than the seminaries elects a significant number of members to each college/university board: at the national level four members and at the district level five members, including the president of the geographic district in which the institution is located; and

WHEREAS, The elected members of college/university boards are no less capable of appointing members to their boards than members of seminary boards; and

WHEREAS, It will help to keep the colleges/universities close to the Synod when the board members who are responsible to the Synod via election, either at the national or the district level, are specifically tasked with appointing the appointed board members, as in the case of the seminary boards; and

WHEREAS, The Missouri District adopted an overture calling upon the Synod to reaffirm the current system of election even though it was generally acknowledged in the discussion on the district convention floor that no particular case had been made to reaffirm this particular arrangement at this time; therefore be it

Resolved, That a second sentence be added to Bylaw 3.10.5.2 (3) as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.10.5.2 The board of regents of each college and university shall consist of no more than 17 voting members.

...

3. No less than four and no more than eight laypersons shall be appointed as voting members by the board of regents. Appointed members may not vote on the appointment of any members of the board.

...

Carrollton Circuit Forum
Missouri District

7-06

To Regionalize Governance of CUS Colleges and Universities

WHEREAS, To survive and thrive in today's highly competitive and complex environment, Christian institutions of higher education require informed, specialized, and experienced boards of regents with a commitment to education in the context of the Gospel, an understanding of and passion for the unique missions of the institutions they govern, a multiplicity of skill sets to support the specific needs of the institutions they govern, and the capacity to support these institutions with their time, talents, treasures, and other resources; and

WHEREAS, The current system of Synod elections of regents does not always provide regents who are as informed, skilled, and experienced as is necessary to meet the needs of the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System (CUS) and the challenges that these institutions face; and

WHEREAS, The size, scale, and complexity of the Concordia colleges and universities, now exceeding 35,000 students and half a billion dollars in combined budgets, require executive leaders of academic background who support and promote a Christ-centered, values-oriented education and possess a diverse set of fund-raising, organizational and managerial, higher education law and compliance, financial, and other abilities; and

WHEREAS, The boards of directors of the individual CUS colleges and universities are subject to applicable local law and accreditation standards; therefore be it

Resolved, That the governance structures of the individual CUS colleges and universities be changed to provide that

- the board of each college or university shall determine the total number of regents, all of whom will be appointed by the board;
- each board of regents shall include among its members the president of the geographic LCMS district in which the college or university is located;
- each board in its appointment of regents shall consider candidates (including ordained, commissioned, and lay individuals) recommended from the Synod's districts and President, as well as any other recommendations that such board considers appropriate;
- all regents must be active members of congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod within the region in which the college or university is located;

and be it further

Resolved, That the process of selecting the presidents of the individual CUS colleges and universities be changed to provide that each board of regents will choose its institution's president after it conducts an appropriate search process from among a qualified pool of members of good standing of LCMS congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod President or his representative shall have one vote; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod's Bylaws be amended to reflect such changes to the governance structure and presidential selection process of the individual CUS colleges and universities.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

7-07

To Modify Governance of CUS Colleges and Universities

WHEREAS, Higher education is in a time of significant change, including but not limited to demographic shifts in prospective student populations, increasing market competition from non-profit and for-profit providers of education, ongoing innovations in technology and academic program-delivery models, increasing compliance demands, and growing financial complexities; and

WHEREAS, Christian colleges and universities face additional challenge to be faithful to their confession in an increasingly secular culture; and

WHEREAS, To survive and thrive in today's highly competitive and complex environment, Christian institutions of higher education require informed, specialized, and experienced boards of regents, with a common commitment to education in the context of the Christian Gospel, an understanding of and passion for the unique missions of the institutions they govern, a multiplicity of skill sets to support the specific needs of the institutions they govern, and the capacity to support these institutions with their time, talent, treasure, and other resources; and

WHEREAS, The current system of regional and national Synod elections of regents does not always provide regents who are as informed, skilled, and experienced as is necessary to meet the specific needs and challenges of the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System (CUS) to which they are elected; and

WHEREAS, The size, scale, and complexity of the CUS colleges and universities, now exceeding 35,000 students and half a billion dollars in combined budgets, require executive leaders of academic backgrounds who support and promote a Christ-centered, values-oriented education, and possess a diverse set of abilities, including fund-raising, organizational and managerial, higher education law and compliance, and financial; and

WHEREAS, The boards of directors of the individual CUS colleges and universities are subject to applicable local law and regional accreditation standards; and

WHEREAS, The CUS colleges and universities desire to preserve and extend their identity as Lutheran institutions of higher education which offer quality, affordable education; and

WHEREAS, The structure of the Concordia University System, established in 1992, is in need of modification to meet the current and future challenges of Lutheran higher education; therefore be it

Resolved, That 2016 LCMS convention give thanks to God for the treasures it has in its nine colleges and universities; and be it further

Resolved, That the governance structures of the individual CUS colleges and universities be changed to provide the following:

- The board of regents of each college or university will determine the total number of regents, all of whom will be appointed by that respective board.
- Each board of regents will include among its members the president of the geographic LCMS district in which the college or university is located.
- Each board in its appointments of regents will consider candidates (including ordained, commissioned, and lay individuals) recommended from LCMS districts in proximity to the college or university, as well as any other recommendations that such board considers appropriate.
- All regents must be active members of congregations of the LCMS.

and be it further

Resolved, That the process of selecting the presidents of the individual CUS colleges and universities be changed to provide that each board of regents will choose its institution's president after it conducts an appropriate search process from among a qualified pool of members of the Synod or members in good standing of the Synod's congregations; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod's Bylaws be amended to reflect such changes to the governance structure and presidential selection process of the individual CUS colleges and universities.

Board of Directors, Eastern District; New England District;
Florida-Georgia District

7-08

To Adjust Election Process for College and University Presidents

WHEREAS, The process of election of a president of a Concordia University System (CUS) college or university (Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2) begins with a local search committee that prepares a short list of at least five candidates; and

WHEREAS, The short list is submitted to a three-member panel for prior approval, the panel consisting of the President of the Synod, the district president on the institution's board of regents, and the chair of the CUS Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, This prior-approval panel thus creates the final slate from which the local board of regents elects its next president; and

WHEREAS, The current bylaw provides that the prior-approval panel may choose to remove names from the short list by a two-thirds majority vote; and

WHEREAS, When these votes come from the President of the Synod and the chair of the CUS board, it distances the process from the local and regional constituents of each CUS school; and

WHEREAS, The local and regional constituents of each CUS school are highly invested in the direction and future of the CUS school and are involved in the support and teamwork of the school's leadership; and

WHEREAS, The local influence and voice of the students (and their LCMS families) attending each school is essential; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 (d) (1) be amended to expand the prior-approval panel to include a representative of the college or university's board of regents as chosen by that board; and be it further

Resolved, That Synod Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 (d) (2) be amended to require the prior-approval panel to make their decision to remove names from the short list by a three-fourths majority vote.

Board of Directors, Northwest District; Board of Directors,
Florida-Georgia District

7-09

To Reaffirm Bylaws Governing Composition of CUS Boards of Regents

WHEREAS, The universities and colleges of our Synod continue to be blessed by God and are growing in their enrollment of students and faculty; and

WHEREAS, These universities and colleges, which are located throughout our Synod, can best understand the unique opportunities and challenges that they face in their locations; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in several recent national conventions carefully considered the composition of the boards of regents of our colleges and universities and adopted their current composition; and

WHEREAS, The qualifications for serving on a Concordia University System (CUS) board of regents are spelled out carefully in the Bylaws of the Synod (Bylaw 3.10.5.2.7); and

WHEREAS, All members of a board of regents are to be members of the congregations of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The maximum number of members of a board of regents is 17, with many of those members to be elected by the district and Synod conventions (4 elected in national conventions, 4 elected in the district convention, plus the president of the district in which the institution resides); and

WHEREAS, The district president serving as a voting member of the board of regents is charged to represent the Synod in his district (Bylaw 4.4.2); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Northwest District in convention give thanks for the service of those who are serving the church on the various boards of regents of our colleges and universities and memorialize the LCMS national convention to do the same; and be it further

Resolved, That the Northwest District in convention voice its support of the current adopted LCMS Bylaws governing the election and responsibilities of the boards of regents of the Synod's colleges and universities, and memorialize the LCMS national convention to reaffirm these same adopted Bylaws.

Northwest District; Missouri District

7-10

To Harmonize Prior Approval Process for Theology Faculty among Concordia Institutions

WHEREAS, 2013 Res. 5-11B restored the prior approval process for initial appointments to seminary faculties, ensuring that review of such appointments would occur by Synod officials with significant synodwide responsibility, for the well-being of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Res. 5-05B also restored the prior approval process for initial appointments of theology faculty at Concordia University System (CUS) institutions but set forth a process different from that used for seminary faculties; and

WHEREAS, The prior approval process has been beneficial to Concordia University Chicago, and has not caused any issues with institutional accreditation or otherwise; and

WHEREAS, CUS schools are given the exclusive responsibility for the training of ministers of religion—commissioned; and

WHEREAS, An important mission of the CUS is to prepare church workers, many of whom continue their theological education at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; and

WHEREAS, “We, though many, are one body in Christ” Romans 12:5; and

WHEREAS, Students continuing through multiple institutions of the CUS, as well as to the Synod at large, would benefit from the application of consistent standards of excellence in the selection and approval of theology faculty, whether serving at the college, university, or seminary level; and

WHEREAS, It is appropriate to harmonize the prior approval processes among all Concordia institutions of higher learning to ensure a consistent standard of excellence; and

WHEREAS, It is also appropriate that the prior approval process evaluate the work and scholarship of those persons being considered for tenure or continuing-level appointments; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks for the diligent and faithful work of all those who have been involved in the prior approval processes as they now exist; and be it further

Resolved, That the Bylaws of the Synod be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.6.6.1 The Board of Directors of the Concordia University System has authority with respect to the Synod's colleges and universities. It shall have the overall responsibility to provide for the education of pre-seminary students, ministers of religion—commissioned, other professional church workers of the Synod, and others desiring a Christian liberal arts education by providing prior approval as set forth in Bylaw 3.10.5.6.2 for all initial full-time theology appointments to college/university faculties and by coordinating the activities of the Synod's colleges and universities as a unified system of the Synod through their respective boards of regents.

3.10.4.7.3 The board of regents on recommendation of the president of the seminary shall appoint all full-time members of the faculty.

(a) All initial appointments, and all grants of tenure, to seminary faculties 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. Initial appointment refers to the initial engagement of any person who will teach one or more seminary courses, other than visiting faculty who teach no more than one academic year in any three-year period.

3.10.5.6.2 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. All initial appointments and all grants of tenure or continuing appointment 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 the chairman of the CUS Board (or his designee), and shall include a thorough theological review. The three voters shall be ordained. The process shall be facilitated by the president of CUS. Initial appointment refers to the engagement of any person who will teach one or more theology courses, regardless of assigned academic department, other than visiting faculty who teach no more than one academic year in any three-year period. 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.

Board of Regents
Concordia University Chicago

7-11

To Facilitate Communication and Mutual Accountability between CUS Schools and Synod at Large

WHEREAS, Resolutions of the 2013 Synod convention strengthened the governance process for the Concordia University System (CUS) institutions, to assist them in maintaining a faithful confession of Christ, academic excellence, and financial viability; and

WHEREAS, Currently only four of the up-to-seventeen members of each institution's board of regents are expressly selected to represent the interest of the Synod at large; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Res. 5-01A commended the CUS institutions for their faithful witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and adherence to the teachings of Holy Scripture, especially with regard to cultural challenges faced by their students, and called for increased interaction between the President of the Synod and the institutions; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Res. 5-05B improved the governance process for CUS boards of regents by imposing specific requirements for qualifications of regents, and by requiring boards of regents to document to the CUS Board of Directors various key factors including financial stewardship, faithfulness to the church, and educational quality; and

WHEREAS, The President of the Synod has many responsibilities with respect to CUS institutions, including, *inter alia*, Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 (c), which provides that he "shall at regular intervals officially visit or cause to be visited all the educational institutions of the Synod to exercise supervision over the doctrine taught and practiced in those institutions"; Bylaw 3.3.1.2 (a), which provides that he "shall at regular intervals officially visit or cause to be visited all the educational institutions of the Synod and thereby exercise oversight over their administration as it relates to adherence to the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod"; and Bylaw 3.3.1.3 (b), which provides that he "shall make provisions for new district presidents and members of boards and commissions of the Synod to be acquainted with their duties and responsibilities"; and

WHEREAS, Each CUS institution and the Synod would benefit from increased communication and coordination with the Synod at large, to ensure that it remains closely affiliated with the Synod; and

WHEREAS, To ensure communication and mutual accountability while ensuring that governance of CUS institutions remains with their respective boards of regents, whose vocation, fiduciary duty, and authority within the Bylaws are to be respected, it is appropriate that the President of the Synod have the authority to appoint two members to each respective CUS board of regents; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Bylaws of the Synod be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.10.5.2 The board of regents of each college and university shall consist of no more than 19 ~~17~~ voting members.

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.
3. No fewer than four and no more than eight laypersons shall be appointed as voting members by the board of regents.
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 ordained minister and one layperson or commissioned minister shall be appointed by the President of the Synod prior to September

1 following each convention of the Synod; at least one of the two shall be a resident of the geographic district in which the college or university is located.

Board of Regents
Concordia University Chicago

7-12

To Amend Bylaw 3.10.5.2 Election Process for CUS Boards of Regents

WHEREAS, The board of regents of each school in the Concordia University System (CUS) currently consists of members elected or appointed as follows (Bylaw 3.10.5.2):

- One ordained minister, one commissioned minister, and two laypersons elected at Synod conventions;
- One ordained minister, one commissioned minister, and two laypersons elected at the geographical district convention;
- Four to eight laypersons appointed as voting members by the board of regents; and
- The president of the district in which the college or university is located.

and

WHEREAS, The local and regional constituents of each CUS school are highly invested in the direction and future of the CUS school and are involved in the support and teamwork of the school's leadership; and

WHEREAS, The local influence and voice of the students (and their LCMS families) attending each school are essential; therefore be it

Resolved, That the elected members of the board of regents of each college and university of the Concordia University System shall be elected at the geographical district's conventions. Appointed members shall be appointed as the board of regents itself determines.

Michigan District

7-13

To Enhance CUS Election Process for College and University Presidents

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 (c) specifies that the election of a new president of a CUS college or university begins with a short list of at least five candidates prepared by a search committee; and

WHEREAS, The short list of candidates is submitted to a panel of two national representatives (the President of the Synod and the chair of the CUS Board of Directors) and one district representative (the president of the geographical district where the college or university is located), who vet the list and may remove candidates from further consideration; and

WHEREAS, The local constituents of the college or university are intimately aware of the direction of the school and its interaction with local LCMS churches and the community, and will work most closely with the new president; and

WHEREAS, The constituents are not directly represented on the panel; and

WHEREAS, Support and involvement of those constituents will strengthen the quality and representativeness of the panel's deliberations; therefore be it

Resolved, That to represent those constituents, Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 (d) (1) be amended to expand the panel with a fourth member, who shall be a member of the college or university's board of regents as selected by that board; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.5.5.2 (d) (2) be amended to state that the decision to remove a name from the short list shall require a majority vote by the panel.

Prince of Peace
Portland, OR

7-14

COMMISSION ON HANDBOOK 2016 LCMS Convention OMNIBUS OVERTURE #6 (Concordia University System)

The Commission on Handbook recognizes that its proposed overtures to the 2016 convention can be grouped together according to same-subject matter to facilitate the work of the floor committee. This “omnibus” overture groups the commission’s bylaw change proposals regarding the Concordia University System into a single overture for the floor committee’s convenience.

A. To Clarify How District-Appointed College/University Board of Regents Members’ Terms of Office Are Established

Rationale

The CCM has opined (CCM Opinion 14-2722) that boards of regents of the Synod’s colleges and universities must determine when to appoint members for three-year terms (since this is not currently regulated in the Synod’s Bylaws), so long as such terms are consistent with the Bylaws’ plain sense of “a three-year term.” The Commission on Handbook proposes the following action by the 2016 Synod convention to amend item 3 under Bylaw 3.10.5.2 accordingly.

Proposed Action

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.10.5.2 The board of regents of each college and university shall consist of no more than 17 voting members.

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.
3. No less than four and no more than eight laypersons shall be appointed as voting members by the board of regents according to a process determined by the individual institution.
4. The president of the district in which the college or university is located ...

B. To Provide Clarity to Bylaws Governing Concordia University System Faculty Policies and Dispute Resolution

Rationale

The 2013 Res. 5-06A “To Revise Bylaw 3.10.5.6 re College and University Faculties” removed much of the content of Bylaws 3.10.5.6ff as being no longer relevant at the Synod level, thereby to allow boards of regents to set their own policies governing faculty and academic matters.

Res. 5-06A replaced the deleted bylaw paragraphs with new paragraphs requiring each educational institution to state policies and procedures related to faculty matters (3.10.5.6.1), to state terms and

conditions of employment and limitations on academic freedom in appointment documents (3.10.5.6.2), and to provide a formal procedure for carrying out performance reviews on a regular basis (3.10.5.6.3).

Res. 5-06A also detailed proper causes for termination of faculty employment (3.10.5.6.4), retained bylaw language regarding consequences of the removal of faculty members from the roster of the Synod (3.10.5.6.4.1), and added a bylaw requiring Concordia University System dispute resolution guidelines for use by faculty members who wish to challenge a termination decision (3.10.5.6.4.2).

This process of removing former Bylaws 3.10.5.6ff resulted in newly adopted bylaws that are less than clear in their expectations for dispute resolution related to faculty employment and academic matters. In addition, Res. 5-06A also removed the former Bylaw 3.10.5.6.9 governing the handling of complaints against academic institutions’ faculty or administration.

The following proposed bylaw amendments will clarify the wording of the replacement bylaw paragraphs and essentially restore the dispute resolution process for addressing complaints against faculty or administration members.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That new Bylaws 3.6.6.7 and 3.6.6.8 governing Concordia University System policy administration and dispute resolution be adopted as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Concordia University System

...

3.10.5.6.1

3.6.6.7 The Concordia University System Board of Directors shall maintain in its policies a list of subject matters that each educational institution shall state must address in its own policies and procedures, related to include faculty appointments, employment contracts, contract renewal, contract termination, faculty organization, modified service, and sabbaticals, and dispute resolution within the Concordia University System’s Standard Operating Procedures Manual for Dispute Resolution:

3.6.6.8 The Concordia University System Board of Directors shall maintain and implement the following dispute resolution process to respond to any complaint regarding an institution’s faculty or administration, including those arising out of Bylaw 3.10.5.6.4, with the exception of complaints belonging under Bylaw sections 2.14 and 2.17 that must be referred to a district president.

(a) If a board of regents receives a complaint against a member of that institution’s faculty or administration concerning any matter, it shall, except in situations which may place the complainant at personal risk, direct him/her first to meet face-to-face with the respondent in the manner described in Matthew 18:15 in an attempt to resolve the issue. The president of the institution shall ordinarily assist in this attempt. If he is the respondent, the chairman of the board of regents shall act in his stead.

(b) If the complainant is of the opinion that such informal reconciliation efforts have failed and wishes to continue to pursue the matter, he/she shall prepare a written statement of the matter in dispute and a written statement setting forth in detail the efforts that were made to achieve information reconciliation. These statements shall be provided to the board of regents and the respondent.

(c) Within 21 days after receipt of the written statements of the complainant, the respondent shall submit a written reply to the board of regents and the complainant. If the respondent fails to reply, the

allegations of the statement of the matter in dispute shall be deemed accepted.

(d) If, after receipt of the respondent's reply or no reply, the board of regents determines that all informal reconciliation efforts have failed, it shall (within one month) form a Review Committee of five persons chosen as follows:

(1) The complainant and the respondent shall each select one faculty member and one regent.

(2) The Secretary of the Synod shall select the fifth member of the committee by blind draw from the Synod's roster of hearing facilitators, who shall serve as chairman of the committee.

(e) If the board decides that the matter is of such a nature that the interests of the institution will best be served by limiting the activities of the respondent, it may do so. However, contractual obligations of the institution shall continue until the matter is resolved.

(f) The review committee shall proceed as follows:

(1) The committee shall hold its first hearing no later than 60 days after the last committee member has been appointed.

(2) The chairman of the committee shall notify the complainant and the respondent, at least 28 days in advance, of the date, time, and place of the said hearing.

(3) If any part of the dispute involves a specific question of doctrine or doctrinal application, each party shall have the right to an opinion from the Commission on Theology and Church Relations. If it involves questions of Constitution or Bylaw interpretation, each party shall have a right to an interpretation from the Commission on Constitutional Matters. The request for an opinion must be made through the Review Committee, which shall determine the wording of the question(s). The request for an opinion must be made within four weeks of the final formation of the Review Committee. If a party does not request such an opinion within the designated time, such a request may still be made to the Review Committee, which shall, at its discretion, determine whether the request shall be forwarded. The Review Committee shall also have the right, at any time, to request an opinion from the Commission on Theology and Church Relations or the Commission on Constitutional Matters. When an opinion has been requested, the time limitations will not apply until the opinion has been received by the parties. Any opinion received must be followed by the Review Committee.

(4) All hearings shall be private, attended only by the parties and the witnesses who can substantiate the facts relevant to the matter in dispute. The Review Committee shall follow the procedures set forth in the *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* for this bylaw to be followed in the hearing and shall establish the relevancy of evidence so that each party shall be given an opportunity to present fully its respective position. In performing its duty, the Review Committee shall continue efforts to reconcile the parties on the basis of Christian love and forgiveness. If a party is a board or commission of the Synod or one of its districts, it shall be represented by its chairman or a designated member.

(5) Within 60 days after completion of the hearing, the Review Committee shall issue a written decision which shall state the facts determined by the committee and the reasons for its decision and forward them to the parties and the board of regents. The board of regents shall then take appropriate action, which shall be final.

(g) If the committee decides that there is a valid complaint

(1) regarding matters under Bylaw 3.10.5.6.4 (a)–(c) and (g)–(j), it may take whatever action it deems appropriate, including recommendation for termination of the employment contract;

(2) regarding matters under Bylaw 3.10.5.6.4 (d)–(f), if the member of the institution's faculty or administration is a member of the Synod, it must also refer the complaint to the district president, who shall follow the procedure set forth in Bylaw sections 2.14 or 2.17.

(h) At every stage of the above-described procedure, all parties must be furnished copies of all documents filed.

(i) Any decision made pursuant to Bylaw 3.6.6.8 shall be final and binding on the parties involved with no right of further appeal.

(j) In consultation with the Commission on Constitutional Matters, the Board of Directors of Concordia University System shall maintain a *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* to accompany this process, which shall serve as a comprehensive procedures manual for this bylaw.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.10.5.6ff governing Concordia University System faculties administration be amended as follows:

Concordia University System Faculties

3.10.5.6 The faculty of each college or university of the Synod shall consist of the president, the full-time faculty, and the part-time faculty.

3.10.5.6.1 ~~The Concordia University System Board of Directors shall maintain in its policies a list of subject matters that Each educational institution shall state must address in its own policies and procedures, related to include faculty appointments, employment contracts, contract renewal, contract termination, faculty organization, modified service, and sabbaticals, and dispute resolution within the Concordia University System's Standard Operating Procedures Manual for Dispute Resolution.~~

3.10.5.6.2 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.

3.10.5.6.3 A formal procedure shall be in place to carry out performance reviews for all faculty on a regular basis.

3.10.5.6.4 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

3.10.5.6.4.1 A faculty member who is on the 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 es-

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.

3.10.5.6.4.2 An appeal process ~~following Concordia University System's Standard Operating Procedures Manual for Dispute Resolution provided by the Concordia University System Board of Directors~~ shall be in place for use by faculty members who wish to challenge a termination decision.

Commission on Handbook

7-15

To Amend Bylaws to Strengthen CUS Boards of Regents While Also Providing Outside Guidance

WHEREAS, Current Synod Bylaws include on each Concordia college and university board of regents eight seats for ordained and commissioned ministers and laypersons, to be elected half by the Synod and half by the geographical district in which the institution is located (3.10.5.2 [1-2]); and

WHEREAS, The same Bylaw (3.10.5.2 [3]) enables and directs that same board to appoint four to eight additional laypersons "as voting members" on the board of regents; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.10.5.2 (4) states that the district president where the Concordia is located or his designated district vice-president serves as an *ex officio* member; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.6.1.3 (a) requires that "a minimum of one-third of the voting members of every governing board shall be elected by the Synod in convention as described in these Bylaws," raising the question of the validity of Bylaw 3.10.5.2 (3); and

WHEREAS, The Concordias desire to have at their disposal certain disciplines of other-than-theological expertise, such as persons with an advanced academic degree, experience in higher education administration, administration of complex organizations, finance, law, investments, technology, human resources, facilities management, or fund development; and

WHEREAS, Many, if not most, of these disciplines are already on their payrolls; and

WHEREAS, At least fifteen overtures to the 2013 LCMS convention expressed various concerns over the governance and administration of the Concordias; and

WHEREAS, "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" (Bylaw 3.10.5.1); and

WHEREAS, The duties of the boards of regents are, therefore, not exclusively and perhaps not even principally financial in nature, their responsibility being the supervision of the overall welfare and mission of these educational institutions within the mission of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, It is common practice in both public and private institutions of higher learning to establish advisory boards (or other similar titles) to assist the administration of the institution in carrying out the policies established by the governing body (here, the boards of regents) and to suggest other improvements; and

WHEREAS, It would seem possible to satisfy both the desire for closer theological oversight and the need for certain outside expertise; therefore be it

Resolved, That current Bylaw 3.10.5.2 be modified as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.10.5.2 The board of regents of each college and university shall consist of no more than ~~17~~15 voting members.

1. ~~One~~Four ordained ministers, ~~one~~two commissioned ministers, and ~~two~~four laypersons shall be elected by the convention 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.
3. ~~No less than four and no more than eight laypersons shall be appointed as voting members by the board of regents.~~
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 a *ex officio* member.
54. 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.
65. Not more than two of the elected members shall be members of the same congregation.
76. ~~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: 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. Demonstrated familiarity and support of the institution is a desired quality in the candidate. When regents are elected at the national convention of the Synod, qualifications shall be reviewed and verified as outlined in Bylaw 3.12.3.7. When regents are elected at district conventions or appointed by the board of regents, 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. While any person able to contribute meaningfully to guiding the mission of a Synod college or university is qualified to serve on a board of regents, the following qualities may prove valuable: an aptitude and desire to hold fast the confession of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and a close connection or experience with educational programs of the institution (particularly in church work).~~

and be it further

Resolved, That each Concordia college or university be authorized, at the discretion of the board of regents, to assemble and budget for a separate, nonvoting advisory board to provide assistance, expertise, and advice on temporal matters to the administration and to the board of regents. Such advisory boards could consist of not more than ten members appointed by the board of regents. Candidates could include persons with an advanced academic degree, experience in higher education administration, administration of complex organizations, finance, law, investments, technology, human resources, facilities management, or fund development; and be it further

Resolved, That, for consistency, Bylaw 3.12.3.5 (e) and (f) be deleted; and be it finally

Resolved, That all wording in Bylaw 3.12.3.7 (c) after the first sentence (ending in "... by a simple majority vote.") be deleted.

Mt. Pleasant Circuit
Iowa District East

7-16

To Reaffirm Equal Voting Privileges of Elected and Appointed CUS Regents

WHEREAS, The universities and colleges of our Synod continue to be blessed by God and are growing in their enrollment of students and faculty; and

WHEREAS, Effective boards of regents must exercise an increasing level of governance and leadership while remaining faithful to the mission and needs of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The universities and colleges of our Synod, which are located throughout our Synod, can best understand the unique opportunities and challenges they face in their location; and

WHEREAS, 2007 Res. 5-04 carefully considered the composition of the boards of regents of our colleges and universities and adopted their current composition; and

WHEREAS, The qualifications for serving on a board of regents is spelled out carefully in the Bylaws of the Synod (Bylaw 3.10.5.2); and

WHEREAS, All members of the boards of regents are to be members of a congregation of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The maximum number of members of a board of regents is seventeen, with the majority of those members to be elected by the district conventions and the Synod convention (four elected in national conventions, four elected in the district conventions, plus the president of the district in which the institution resides); and

WHEREAS, The district president serving as a voting member of the board of regents is charged to represent the Synod in his district (Bylaw 4.4.2); and

WHEREAS, The current boards of regents members demonstrate commitment to the mission and purpose of the respective institution; knowledge regarding the region in which the institution is located; commitment to allocating time, talent, and treasure to the institution; assisting with the identification and encouragement of donors; and maintaining the Lutheran heritage and confession of the institution; and

WHEREAS, Each board of regents is best able to assess its own unique needs and identify and appoint individuals who best meet those needs; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention give thanks for the service of those who are serving the church on the various boards of regents of our colleges and universities; and be it further

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District in convention encourage the Synod to reaffirm the current bylaws governing the election and responsibilities of the boards of regents of our colleges and universities, which provide for equal voting privileges of elected and appointed regents.

South Wisconsin District

7-17

To Modify CUS College and University Presidential Selection Process

WHEREAS, Higher education is in a time of significant change, including but not limited to demographic shifts in prospective student populations, increasing market competition from nonprofit and for-profit providers of education, ongoing innovations in technology and academic program delivery models, increasing compliance demands, and growing financial complexities; and

WHEREAS, Christian colleges and universities face the additional challenge to be faithful to their confession in an increasingly secular culture; and

WHEREAS, To survive and thrive in today's highly competitive and complex environment, Christian institutions of higher education require informed, specialized, and experienced boards of regents, with a common commitment to education in the context of the Christian Gospel, an understanding of and passion for the unique missions of the institutions they govern; a multiplicity of skill sets to support the

specific needs of the institutions they govern; and the capacity to support these institutions with their time, talent, treasure, and other resources; and

WHEREAS, The current system of regional and Synod elections of regents does not always provide regents who are as informed, skilled, and experienced as is necessary to meet the needs of the colleges and universities of the Concordia University System and the challenges these institutions face; and

WHEREAS, The size, scale, and complexity of the Concordia colleges and universities, now exceeding 35,000 students and half a billion dollars in combined budgets, require executive leaders of academic backgrounds who support and promote a Christ-centered, values-oriented education and possess a diverse set of abilities, including fund-raising, organizational and managerial, higher education law and compliance, financial, and more; and

WHEREAS, The boards of directors of the individual colleges and universities of the Concordia University System are subject to applicable local law and accreditation standards; and

WHEREAS, The colleges and universities of the Concordia University System desire to preserve and extend their identity as Lutheran institutions of higher education, which offer quality, affordable education; and

WHEREAS, The structure of the Concordia University System, established in 1992, is in need of modification to meet the current and future challenges of Lutheran higher education; therefore be it

Resolved, that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention give thanks to God for the treasures it has in its nine colleges and universities; and be it further

Resolved, That the process of selecting the presidents of the individual colleges and universities of the Concordia University System be changed to provide that each board of regents will choose its institution's president after it conducts an appropriate search process from among a qualified pool of members of the LCMS; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod's Bylaws be amended to reflect such changes to the presidential selection process of the individual colleges and universities of the Concordia University System.

Atlantic District

7-18

To Divest Concordia College Alabama from Concordia University System

WHEREAS, One hundred years ago, the LCMS accepted a request from Rosa Young to begin and assist in educational and Gospel-outreach work among the underserved and disenfranchised citizens of the Black Belt of Alabama (and the Lord has blessed those efforts); and

Whereas, Opportunities for Gospel outreach continue to this day; and

WHEREAS, On August 15, 2015, Dr. Tilahun Menedo, President of Concordia College Alabama (CCA), received an email stating: "*Resolved*, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Board of Directors herewith requests the CU Alabama Board of Regents join the Board of Directors and the Concordia University System Board of Directors to divest Concordia College Alabama from the Synod under Bylaw 3.6.6.5 (k)"; and "*Resolved*, that options for divestment or separation be discussed with Selma regents"; and

WHEREAS, Throughout its 94-year existence, the academy and college have struggled financially and have faced the prospect of closing; and

WHEREAS, Providing the opportunity for higher education to citizens of the Black Belt (and beyond in the Southeast) is going to exceed what student tuition payments currently can provide; and

WHEREAS, CCA has developed educational programs that enable students from that impoverished area to earn associate and bachelor degrees; and

WHEREAS, Explorations toward combining with another Concordia University System (CUS) school have been made, but have not produced results; and

WHEREAS, Other institutions in the CUS have been generous in offering CCA assistance in developing new academic programs, but these efforts are limited by constraints of the accreditation process; and

WHEREAS, The acquisition of an adjacent 36-acre campus in 2011, as well as more than 21 capital improvement projects on the campus and a viable campus master plan, provide the college with a campus that will be serviceable for the future; and

WHEREAS, In spring 2016, the college is completing a strategic plan, accompanied by a business plan; and

WHEREAS, CCA fills a unique niche in that it is the only Lutheran Historically Black College or University (HBCU); and

WHEREAS, The college's board of regents, in spring 2016, is exploring a reorganization plan that would continue affordable traditional degrees for commuting and residential students; would stress Lutheran Christian, cultural, educational, patriotic, and work-ethic goals as it incorporates aspects of a "work college"; and would offer online courses, certificate programs, and an emphasis on Christ-centered civil justice; and

WHEREAS, The reorganized school would desire to assist the Synod's mission of preparing church workers and, in fact, would look favorably upon a possible future request from the Synod to re-enter its system; therefore be it

Resolved, That CCA be divested from the CUS; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS provide no less than three million dollars of assistance in each of the calendar years 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019; and be it further

Resolved, That the current campus of CCA be deeded to its successor entity without cost; and be it further

Resolved, That each of the 35 LCMS districts be encouraged by the Synod's Board of Directors and CUS to determine for itself how to provide 10 thousand dollars of financial support in each of the calendar years 2017, 2018, and 2019, but that it not be from money currently shared with the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the successor entity, with the assistance of a prospective donor list provided by the Synod's mission advancement unit, have permission to solicit donations from members and organizations within the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS would assist the college in conducting a broad capital campaign to support the higher education mission among the underprivileged in the Alabama Black Belt; and be it finally

Resolved, That the successor entity be granted recognized service organization (RSO) status in the Synod, thus enabling the institution to extend divine calls to ordained and commissioned members of the Synod and to participate in the Concordia Plans.

Board of Regents
Concordia College Alabama

7-19

To Enable Concordia University System to Maintain Doctrinal Integrity in Face of Existential Threats

Preamble

The redefinition of marriage promulgated by the Supreme Court of the United States has established a precedent in law which places institutions of higher education in an extremely precarious situation. This was made explicit in oral argumentation before the Supreme Court on April 28, 2015. One justice directly asked the Solicitor General of the United States whether the court's redefinition of marriage could result in the loss of tax-exempt status for universities and colleges which do not change their teachings and practices in accordance with the redefinition. The Solicitor General openly declared, "It's certainly going to be an issue." Many observers of the court were stunned. They have interpreted his answer to this predictable question to be not an accidental admission, but a deliberate and public warning to religious schools across the nation.

For schools that operate on the thinnest of margins and are often located on acres of prime real estate, the loss of tax-exempt status would immediately add exorbitant property taxes to their budget while simultaneously denying the ability of donors to receive a tax write-off for their generosity. The aggregate effect of these two realities would have the immediate effect of closing many institutions. The monumental threat of such financial loss would tempt many institutions to compromise their own doctrine and practice lest they be driven into bankruptcy.

Federal Title IX funds are a second area of exposure. Every one of our Concordia universities receives funds from the federal government under the condition that they abide by Title IX (a 1972 law which, among other things, prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex). Recently, however, the U.S. Department of Education has unilaterally reinterpreted the term "sex discrimination" to include discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Based on this new interpretation, an entire school district in northern Illinois was forced to change its policies about what is sexually appropriate or risk the loss of federal education dollars. The same rule change could, at any moment, be applied to other schools which are obligated to follow Title IX.

While these two threats have not yet been applied to religious schools, there are still other threats which are happening right now. We notice, for instance, the case of Gordon College in Massachusetts. The president of this explicitly Christian school was one of fourteen signers of a letter to President Obama requesting an exemption from his executive order regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. Following this signature, Gordon College experienced three penalties. First, their accreditation before the New England Association of Schools and Colleges was called into question. Second, their management and maintenance contract with the city of Salem, Massachusetts, was cancelled. And third, their agreement with the Lynn Public Schools for student-teaching classrooms was voided. This example demonstrates that financial and institutional threats exist not only at the federal level, but in municipalities, counties, states, and regional organizations.

A second example is happening in California at Pepperdine University, which is affiliated with the Churches of Christ. The state court of California has allowed a suit to go forward from two former students. They allege that Pepperdine's policy against premarital sex

is a violation of Title IX's prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex. Lest we think that the Concordia University System is immune from such financial exposure, we note an incident at Concordia in St. Paul. In late 2015, a student was disciplined for inappropriate sexual behavior. As a result, the university experienced pressure both from within the student body as well as from national media. They were being pressured to apologize for the discipline, change their student policies, and allow LGBT advocacy groups to operate on campus.

In this highly charged educational environment, the mere stroke of a pen has the potential to require the entire Concordia University System to speak and act contrary to the Scriptures they intend to teach or face a sudden and drastic loss of funds. The instability of the situation and the vastness of the exposure may not leave the Synod with enough time to react to any developments in a future convention. Unless the Concordia University System has the authority to act swiftly, there exists a real possibility that the entire system could be lost or broken up in between conventions of the Synod. Recognizing these realities and committed to maintain the doctrinal integrity of our universities, therefore be it

Resolved, That in the event that there are any challenges to our schools that would hinder our capacity to teach and confess our faith and to have ethical standards in accordance with that faith, the Synod authorizes, in advance, that the Concordia University System may take all necessary actions up to and including the consolidation of our colleges and universities in order to be faithful to our calling, and that any remaining school or schools may not take any federal money or risk any commitments in any programs that would compromise either the teaching or practicing of the Lutheran Confessions.

Board of Directors
Wyoming District

7-20

To Examine Classical Christian Education

Preamble

The term *classical education* has been used in Western culture for several centuries, with each era adding its own selection of topics. Classical education has emphasized the seeking after of truth, goodness, and beauty and the study of the liberal arts and the great books. The liberal arts are grammar, logic, rhetoric (the verbal arts of the trivium), arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy (the mathematical arts of the quadrivium). This approach to education also includes the study of Latin.

The classical approach teaches students how to learn and how to think and depends on a three-part process of training the mind. The early years of school are spent in absorbing facts, systematically laying the foundations for advanced study. In the middle grades, students learn to think through arguments. In the high school years, they learn to express themselves. This classical pattern is called the trivium. In short, classical education is language-focused; learning is accomplished through words, written and spoken, rather than through images (pictures, videos, and television).

Proposed Action

WHEREAS, A number of LCMS congregations and their schools already offer classical Christian education; and

WHEREAS, The Concordia University System is the primary training facilitator for the educators and administrators of our LCMS schools but does not presently offer a specific classical track for the

training of teachers and administrators to fill the need in classical Christian schools; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Directors of the Concordia University System appoint a committee or assign an existing committee to examine the philosophy and methodology of classical Christian education and the feasibility of adding a classical track for the training of teachers and administrators in the Concordia University System, subsequently to report its findings to the 2019 LCMS convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2015 Texas District convention memorialize the above resolution to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for consideration during its 2016 convention.

Texas District

7-21

To Endorse Classical Liberal Studies Program at Concordia University Chicago

WHEREAS, The Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions command and commend education that shapes students morally as well as intellectually, preparing them to love God and serve their neighbors:

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4)

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Phil. 4:8–9)

For if we want capable and qualified people for both the civil and spiritual realms, we really must spare no effort, time, and expense in teaching and educating our children to serve God and the world. We must not think only of amassing money and property for them. (LC I 172–73)

and

WHEREAS, An increasing number of Lutheran schools are choosing a classical model of education as best suited to carry out these mandates; and

WHEREAS, Classical Lutheran education requires teachers who are richly conversant in Lutheran doctrine and practice, as well as the languages, literature, and history of Western civilization, as Luther himself notes, “One knife cuts better than another; so likewise, one that has learned languages and arts can better and more distinctly teach than another” (Table Talk CXXXVI); and

WHEREAS, Current teacher education programs offered through Concordia University Chicago do an excellent job, and have in many instances served as models statewide and nationwide, in preparing candidates for state certification allowing service in public school settings; and

WHEREAS, The Synod should commend the teacher training programs at the Concordia University System (CUS) institutions that serve the needs of those preparing to enter the educational profession, whether at public, private, or parochial institutions; and

WHEREAS, The Synod should also seek to meet the needs of congregations with classical Lutheran schools desiring Synod-trained candidates to avoid having such congregations seek teacher candidates from colleges and universities outside the CUS; and

WHEREAS, Many preparing to enter the educational profession may wish to study principles other than or in addition to the methodology required to meet requirements set forth by governmental or other secular certification agencies; and

WHEREAS, It is the duty of Synod to “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” (Constitution, Art. III); and

WHEREAS, The Wyoming District in convention, in Res. 3-02-2015, has memorialized the Synod to establish a program for training classical Lutheran teachers; and

WHEREAS, Concordia University Chicago has created a classical liberal studies program that draws on the strength of a broad variety of Concordia University Chicago programs, including music, theology, and languages, as well as the quality of worship life on campus, and is uniquely positioned to create a center for classical Lutheran education, which is not currently being undertaken by any other CUS institution; and

WHEREAS, The establishment of a program designed to train prospective Lutheran teachers would greatly strengthen the service of Concordia University Chicago to the Synod and help ensure the flourishing of Christian education in the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention endorse the classical liberal studies program at Concordia University Chicago for the training of classical Lutheran educators as ministers of religion—commissioned within the CUS, including a strong core of courses in the Scriptures, the Confessions, and the traditional liberal arts, history, literature, and languages of Western civilization, supplemented by practical pedagogical experience; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod provide funding for such work of \$150,000 within the coming triennium, with a report by the president of the CUS or his representative to be given at the 2019 Synod convention on the progress thereof.

Board of Regents
Concordia University Chicago

7-22

To Instruct CUS Institutions to Teach Synod Position on Church and Ministry

WHEREAS, It is vitally important to church life that not only the relationships between congregations and pastors be healthy but also the relationships between and among congregations, pastors, and other professional church workers such as Lutheran school teachers, deaconesses, directors of Christian education, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of parish music, parish assistants, and certified lay ministers; and

WHEREAS, Such healthy relationships have their foundation in sound biblically based and Gospel-centered theology; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod declared Dr. C. F. W. Walther’s presentation on church and ministry at the Synod’s 1851 convention and his resulting book of the next year, *The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Ministry*, to be its doctrinal position on the matters covered; and

WHEREAS, As recently as 2001, the Synod reaffirmed Walther’s book, *The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Ministry* as its official position; and

WHEREAS, This book addresses not only the church and the Office of the Ministry (*Predigtamt*) but also the other “ecclesiastical and sacred” offices in the church which stem from this office (see Thesis VIII on the Ministry); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Carrollton Circuit Forum memorializes the Synod to instruct the institutions of the Concordia University System

to recommit themselves to teaching our Synod’s doctrinal position on these matters, especially as they train students in all church work preparation programs.

Carrollton Circuit Forum
Missouri District

7-23

To Request Alternate Route for Teacher Certification and LCMS Roster

Rationale

There is only one primary route to Synod training and official (roster) recognition of teacher credentials in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), and that route passes through state (civil government) certification. This route expresses our desire to be subject to the governing authorities (Rom. 13:1–7) and to engage the world in carrying out Christ’s mission. In the past, this route was deemed to be biblically faithful by our Synod under the assumption that the teaching methodology and content required by the several states for certification would not conflict with the doctrine and practice of the LCMS. The Synod’s benevolent dependence upon civil government, based upon this assumption, has become increasingly tenuous in recent years due to the dominant methodological and content assumptions of a civilization that is increasingly alienated from Christian morality and norms: that is, progressive and unbiblical assumptions about human nature; evolving understanding of the nature and role of marriage, fatherhood, and motherhood; uniformitarian and anti-biblical presuppositions concerning the origin of the creation and of man in particular; and the like.

The Supreme Court ruling on *Obergefell v. Hodges*, with its requirement of state conformity to an alien definition of marriage, threatens to unravel the Synod’s dependence upon the state even further. As the testimony before the Supreme Court and the minority opinions in this ruling indicate, benefits bestowed by state and federal government upon religious institutions may soon become forfeit for those religious institutions that do not conform to this alien definition of marriage. These lost benefits could include such things as the withdrawal of state recognition of our schools, certification of our teachers, vouchers, tax exemptions, and student loans.

Whether or not these consequences follow, this is an opportune time for the LCMS to research and develop an alternate route to teacher certification that does not pass through or depend upon the authority, dictates, or ideology of local, state, and federal governments. The Synod has competent expertise in the field of education and is far better qualified than state or federal governments to establish the standards, content, and level of education required for teachers to be competent in our Lutheran schools; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of the Concordia University System, in consultation with the President of Synod, appoint a committee whose task it is to develop a proposal for an alternate route toward LCMS-recognized teacher certification leading to placement on the roster of the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That this committee examine the presuppositions and foundations required to prepare teachers who are equipped to deliver a uniquely Lutheran education thoroughly grounded in Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, rich in the content of our historically Christian culture, and prepared to engage their students with the language, reasoning, and creative expression needed today; and be it further

Resolved, That this teacher certification maintain high standards of academic and professional excellence, including a well-documented understanding of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, a bachelor's degree in the liberal arts, classes and experience in pedagogy, and student teaching under a qualified mentor; and be it finally

Resolved, That the committee bring the proposal for enacting this second route to teacher certification to the 2019 LCMS convention for approval.

Board of Directors
Wyoming District

7-24

To Establish Program for Training Classical Lutheran Teachers

WHEREAS, The Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions command and commend education that shapes students morally as well as intellectually, preparing them to love God and serve their neighbors:

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4)

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Phil. 4:8–9)

For if we want capable and qualified people for both the civil and spiritual realms, we really must spare no effort, time, and expense in teaching and educating our children to serve God and the world. We must not think only of amassing money and property for them. (LC, Fourth Commandment, 172–173;

and

WHEREAS, An increasing number of Lutheran schools are choosing a classical model of education as best suited to carry out these mandates; and

WHEREAS, Classical Lutheran education requires teachers richly conversant in Lutheran doctrine and practice, as well as the languages, literature, and history of Western civilization, as Luther himself notes, “One knife cuts better than another; so likewise, one that has learned languages and arts can better and more distinctly teach than another” (Table Talk CXXXVI); and

WHEREAS, Current teacher education programs offered through the Concordia University System (CUS) do not focus on the classical education model; and

WHEREAS, This forces many classical Lutheran schools to seek teacher candidates from colleges and universities outside the CUS, even though many such schools would favor having Synod-trained candidates; and

WHEREAS, It is the duty of Synod to “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” (Constitution, Art. III 5); and

WHEREAS, In conjunction with this Synod duty, the CUS Board of Directors (BOD) is charged with ensuring that the schools of the CUS are “delivering academic and student programs designed to give students Christ-centered values and tools that equip them for vocations within the church and world” (Bylaw 3.6.6.6 [b]); and

WHEREAS, The establishment of a program designed to train prospective Lutheran teachers with a focus on the classical education model would greatly strengthen the service of the CUS to Synod

members and help ensure the flourishing of Christian education in the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District convention memorialize the Synod to direct the president of the CUS to form a committee to include, at minimum, representatives from the CUS BOD, faculty of the CUS, and administrators, faculty, or staff from schools currently espousing the model of classical Lutheran education; and be it further

Resolved, That this committee will study how to design and implement a program for training classical Lutheran teachers that will include a strong core of courses in the Scriptures, the Confessions, and the traditional liberal arts, history, literature, and languages of Western civilization, supplemented by practical pedagogical experience; and be it finally

Resolved, That a plan for implementation of such a program be enacted within the coming triennium, with a report by the president of the CUS or his representative to be given at the 2019 Synod convention on the progress of the classical Lutheran teacher training program.

Wyoming District

7-25

To Celebrate 125th Anniversary of Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota

WHEREAS, The Lord of the Church has blessed Concordia University—St. Paul by empowering it to serve The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for 125 years as an institution to prepare church workers and lay leaders for thoughtful and informed living, dedicated service to God and humanity, and the enlightened care of God's creation—all within the context of the Christian Gospel; and

WHEREAS, The Lord of the nations has blessed Concordia University—St. Paul with opportunities for ministry in an urban, multicultural setting, with many nations, tribes, people, and languages represented on its campus, and around the world through online education; and

WHEREAS, The God of abundance has blessed Concordia University—St. Paul over the course of a century and a quarter with nearly 35,401 alumni, sainted and living, who have served and led churches, schools, institutions, and communities throughout the world through a variety of vocations; and

WHEREAS, The God of all wisdom and knowledge has blessed Concordia University—St. Paul by enabling it to serve the church and world through 141 graduate and undergraduate programs; and

WHEREAS, The God of grace has blessed Concordia University—St. Paul by leading it to achieve record enrollment numbers in each of the past four academic years, including 2,567 undergraduate, 1,742 graduate, and 71 doctoral students; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention declare Concordia's Founders Day, September 13, 2018, as a synodwide “Concordia University—St. Paul Sunday,” encouraging and facilitating prayers, thanksgiving, offerings, and gifts to be given in celebration of the Lord's abundant blessings to the church through one of its treasured educational institutions; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod pause from its regular business to offer special thanksgiving and praise to almighty God for His continued blessings on Concordia University—St. Paul, Minnesota, and to commend it to His continued providential care.

Concordia University
St. Paul, Minnesota

FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

8. Parochial Schools

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R6, R63

OVERTURES

8-01

To Increase Training of Lutheran Leaders and Administrators for Early Childhood and School Programs

WHEREAS, The LCMS has a long and distinguished history of over 175 years of bringing up children and families through Lutheran schools in the US; and

WHEREAS, God commands: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6); and

WHEREAS, 40 percent of the current Lutheran school administrators are anticipated to retire within the next 5 years; and

WHEREAS, In 2014–15, only 38 percent of the Lutheran preschool to high school educators (teachers and administrators) were actively rostered; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS School Ministry has a School Leadership Development (SLED) program that can train leaders for LCMS schools; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther said that “for the sake of the Church, we must have and maintain Christian schools” (“To the Councilman of All Cities in Germany that they Establish and Maintain Christian Schools,” 1524) and has stated that “the schools will prove the very gates of hell, unless they diligently labour in explaining the Holy Scriptures, and engraving them on the hearts of the youth”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS intentionally train the leaders of the congregations’ early childhood and school programs; and be it further

Resolved, That it be recognized as essential that the recruitment and training of new Lutheran educational leaders occur in order to replace retiring leaders and revitalize Lutheran doctrine in all educational programs; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS ensure that the Office of LCMS School Ministry train early childhood and school leaders; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod fund School Leadership Development (SLED) programs to train such leaders; and be it finally

Resolved, That congregations pray for the leaders and educational programs of LCMS early childhood and school programs.

St. Paul’s, Enid, OK; Board of Directors, English District;
Pacific Southwest District; Board of Directors, Missouri
District; Oklahoma District

8-02

To Support and Ensure Sustainability of Lutheran Schools

WHEREAS, Early childhood, elementary, and secondary schools of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have a long and distinguished history in America, participating in the mission of Christ’s Church for more than 175 years; and

WHEREAS, Lutheran schools bear witness to the importance our ancestors gave to Dr. Martin Luther’s imperative that “for the sake of the Church, we must have and maintain Christian schools” (“To

the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools,” 1524); and

WHEREAS, The purpose and mission of Lutheran schools is to make disciples for Christ (Matt. 28:19–20), help individuals mature into the stature of Christ (Eph. 4:16; 2 Pet. 3:18), and help equip individuals for every good work (2 Tim. 3:17); and

WHEREAS, Schools in the LCMS strive to connect the congregation to the community they serve through daily instruction, activities, and programs; and

WHEREAS, Lutheran schools provide a strong witness to their communities by proclaiming the pure Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as taught in the Scriptures in addition to rigorous academic programs, competitive athletic programs, a passion for the arts, and education for the whole child; and

WHEREAS, In Lutheran schools, families outside the church are often drawn to life together with LCMS families, thus facilitating a Gospel witness; and

WHEREAS, LCMS schools (early childhood, elementary, and high schools) are the second-largest parochial educational system in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Congregations and Lutheran schools within the LCMS operate 1,190 early childhood centers and preschools; and

Whereas, LCMS congregations operate 842 elementary schools; and

WHEREAS, 85 domestic and three international high schools (Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Hanoi) serve students and their families; and

WHEREAS, The number of Lutheran schools in each category has decreased since the 2013 convention (early childhood, 13 percent; elementary, 3 percent; high school, 3 percent); and

Whereas, 58 percent of LCMS schools serve fewer than 100 children; and

WHEREAS, The anticipated number of school administrators and directors that will be required to fulfill the attrition of school leaders who will retire in the next five years is predicted to be greater than 40 percent; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative that the Synod find more effective ways to embrace Lutheran schools as a critical ministry in congregational life and to support Lutheran schools as they serve in the 21st century; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS Office of School Ministry conduct a comprehensive analysis and design collaborative creative models for the future of Lutheran schools to effectively address the quality and sustainability of schools serving families who no longer can afford or choose Lutheran schools for their children; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS Office of School Ministry establish a funding system to address the disparity of the cost to educate future professional workers to serve in schools that are unable to provide adequate compensation in order for the worker to address the cost of living and retirement of educational debt; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS Office of School Ministry address the critical shortage of current and future school administrators and develop, fund, and implement an intentional plan for identifying and equipping Lutheran educators to serve and lead in schools by the 2019 Synod convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That all church leaders from local to district to Synod (ordained, commissioned, and laity) be advocates of Lutheran education in order that children and families continue to hear the life-changing message of the Gospel.

Board of Directors
Missouri District

8-03

**To Study Reasons for Enrollment Decline
in Lutheran Schools**

WHEREAS, Enrollment in our schools has dropped over the last triennium; and

WHEREAS, This trend seems to be prevalent in but not limited to urban areas; and

WHEREAS, The lack of available Lutheran education hinders the spread of the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, This declining trend is not limited to one district or region of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention advise all districts to establish a task force to study the reasons behind the decline in enrollment of the schools in their districts; and be it further

Resolved, That each district task force report the findings of the study as soon as it is complete but not later than the next Synod convention to the Office of School Ministry for the purpose of the development of strategies to assist all congregations and schools of the Synod in reversing their trend.

Board of Directors, Southeastern District; Board of
Directors, Florida-Georgia District

FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

9. Finance

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R5, R16, R17, R54

OVERTURES

9-01

To Improve Transparency and Accountability for Financial Gifts from God's Stewards

WHEREAS, Monies for special appeals requested by the corporate Synod (e.g., following natural disasters) are reported only in part in Synod publications (e.g., *Reporter* and *The Lutheran Witness*) and sometimes only annually; and

WHEREAS, Donors and members of the Synod are interested in the impact of funds raised and a fuller accounting of special appeals and will appreciate improved financial transparency; and

WHEREAS, The corporate Synod recognizes the need to improve financial reporting from all areas of Synod, including special appeals; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Mid-South District convention commend the various financial offices of the corporate Synod (e.g., the fund development office) for their efforts to date to improve financial transparency and accountability; and be it further

Resolved, That the financial offices of the corporate Synod continue to recognize the desire of donors and members of the Synod to improve processes of reporting and work to provide clear, timely, and transparent accounting for all funding and special appeals, so that the Body of Christ may experience the joy of Gospel-centered mission and ministry beyond the local context or community; and be it further

Resolved, That the Mid-South District encourage the LCMS Board of Directors and national leadership team to pursue all reasonable avenues to enhance such reporting through its varied communication channels, including the dissemination of an official Synod annual report (in addition to the annual "State of the Synod" issue of *The Lutheran Witness*) as well as annual fiscal conferences; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Mid-South District submit this resolution as a memorial to the 2016 Synod convention.

Mid-South District

9-02

To Commend Work of LCMS Foundation

WHEREAS, The Lord of the Church has placed before our Synod many remarkable opportunities for Gospel testimony, both at home and abroad; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation was incorporated in 1958 to promote the growth of our church body by receiving special gifts on behalf of the church, including its congregations, districts, schools, RSOs, auxiliaries, and other organizations; and

WHEREAS, The Foundation offers investment management services for planned gifts, endowments, and trust funds of the Synod and its agencies, striving to offer competitive returns in a low-cost model; and

WHEREAS, The Foundation was created to offer "programs of deferred giving ... for the Synod, its districts, colleges, seminaries,

and other agencies" and to provide for immediate and future work in our Lord's kingdom through proper estate planning, using such devices as unitrusts, annuities, life reserve, and life income agreements to transfer cash, securities, and real estate to the church; and

WHEREAS, Since its incorporation, the LCMS Foundation has distributed over \$1 billion dollars from gifts provided by generous and spirit-moved donors to ministries of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The Foundation earnestly endeavors to continue serving our church body and its entire membership by channeling additional support to the missionary, educational, and other activities of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod commend the LCMS Foundation to our congregations and their membership, urging them to utilize the Foundation's services in making special gifts available for our work at home and abroad; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 Synod convention express deep appreciation to the generous donors who have elected to utilize the channel of the Foundation in the exercise of their Christian stewardship; and be it further

Resolved, That all members of the LCMS be encouraged to use estate planning also to provide additional resources for the extension of Christ's church in the future; and be it further

Resolved, That the Foundation seek to expand its various deferred giving programs within the LCMS for the promotion of the church's mission and ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to the Lord for His gifts and the ability to use them to His glory and the welfare of His church; and be it further

Resolved, That the official boards of all districts, Synod schools, affiliated agencies, and congregations make themselves aware of and be encouraged to utilize the LCMS Foundation's various services and, where feasible, use the Foundation in establishing their own endowment funds; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS, in convention assembled, implore the overflowing blessing of the Lord of the Church on the continued activities of the LCMS Foundation, so that under divine benediction it may continue to be a powerful help in the expansion of our Synod's work.

Don Graf, *Chairman*
David Fiedler, *President*

9-03

To Urge Synod to Increase Seminary Financial Assistance

WHEREAS, The Scriptures ask, "How are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:14b–15a); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's third stated objective for existence (of ten stated objectives) is to "recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth" (Constitution, Art. III 3); and

WHEREAS, The Augsburg Confession reminds us that the Office of the Holy Ministry is a gift of God for the whole church: "To obtain this faith God instituted the office of preaching" (AC V), and we ought therefore support its equipping; and

WHEREAS, The Synod currently dedicates less than 6 percent of its annual Mission and Ministry Operating Budget (\$3.42 million of \$60.9 million "program board" dollars = 5.6 percent; statistics available at www.lcms.org/documentlibrary) to the financial support of

our seminaries (collective operating budget of \$33.4 million) as part of the third stated objective of the Synod's existence; and

WHEREAS, For comparison, the Office of International Missions receives \$31 million of the \$60.9 million, the Office of National Missions received \$9.3 million, and the youth gathering received \$7.4 million in the 2013/2014 budget for its triennial gathering; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran faith must be supported in the United States as in all geographic corners of the world, yet "how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?" And "so that we may obtain this faith, God instituted the office of preaching"; and

WHEREAS, The noble efforts of the Joint Seminary Fund have not sufficiently alleviated the financial burden upon our seminaries; and

WHEREAS, The seminaries of our Synod and their presidents must spend significant time, energy, and resources for fund-raising to meet the seminaries' annual financial needs rather than devoting their efforts more fully to recruiting and training pastors to be sent; and

WHEREAS, The students of our seminaries are often entering their first congregations with significant undergraduate and seminary debt that burdens the very congregations the Synod desires to aid and encourage; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention call on the Synod President's 2017 budget to increase the Synod's support of its seminaries by no less than 2 percent of the total annual Mission and Ministry Operating Budget; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the Synod prayerfully consider increasing their financial support of the Synod's collective effort to benefit our seminaries, future pastors, and the congregations they will serve.

Circuit 5
Northern Illinois District

9-04

To Increase Funding of Seminaries and Seminary Students

WHEREAS, One of the chief purposes of the Synod is to train pastors; and

WHEREAS, The training of pastors is based upon a seminary education; and

Whereas, The LCMS has a long history of quality four-year resident seminary education; and

WHEREAS, Graduates of LCMS seminaries normally go through both four years of college and four years of seminary; and

WHEREAS, The costs of both college and seminary education have risen dramatically; and

WHEREAS, Upon graduation from seminary, pastors can have substantial student debt; and

WHEREAS, Salaries for pastors entering the ministry are not in keeping with other professions that require an equivalent education; and

WHEREAS, Other church bodies have transitioned from resident to distance seminary education in order to deal with increased costs of training pastors; and

WHEREAS, While a transition to distance learning is a blessing and benefit in special circumstances, to fully change from resident to distance learning at the Synod's seminaries could downgrade the excellent level of current pastoral education, preparation, and training; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2015 Minnesota North District convention memorialize the Synod to financially support seminary students more than the current support; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention set the priority of upgrading the financial support of its seminaries; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage its districts to increase scholarship support for its seminary students; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod provide congregations with information to aid them in financially supporting the Synod's seminaries and individual seminary students and include material on education costs and graduate debt loans; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod encourage congregations to have line items in their budgets for seminaries and seminary students.

Minnesota North District

9-05

To Rely on Unrestricted Offerings to Carry Out Mission of Synod

WHEREAS, We have a long-standing practice of congregations sending a portion of their offerings to their district to support mission and ministry in their district, with an expectation that their district will send a portion of those funds to the Synod to support mission and ministry; and

WHEREAS, This model has never been officially reversed, removed, or replaced; and

WHEREAS, We have seen a proliferation of appeals from all corners of the Synod for funds, which has created an individualistic approach to fund-raising rather than championing the biblical practice of tithing and unifying the work of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That districts and the Synod be encouraged to rely on unrestricted offerings from congregations to carry out the mission of the church.

Michigan District

9-06

To Direct the Synod's Board of Directors to Address Budget Redistribution and Synod Organization Better to Fund Seminaries, Global Seminary Initiative, and Missionaries

WHEREAS, One objective for forming a Synod is to accomplish what congregations are not able to do on their own, such as the training of men to be pastors and missionaries (Constitution Art. III 3); and

WHEREAS, The Synod allocates funds for many meetings (such as the Council of Presidents) that could be spent on the support of our seminaries and missionaries who are actually involved in conducting Word and Sacrament ministry to people whom God desires to hear the Gospel and come to salvation; and

WHEREAS, The Synod budget has been stymied over the past two decades due to restricted giving, which has severely limited the Synod's funding of its seminaries and missionaries; and

WHEREAS, Financially supporting seminaries and missionaries would be more Christ-centered and God-pleasing than funding "think tank" endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Our seminaries and missionaries should not raise funds to carry out the work which the Synod has called them to do; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2015 Montana District Convention petition the 2016 LCMS convention to direct the Synod's Board of Directors to investigate and present changes to the Synod's budget and organization to the 2019 LCMS convention in order to redirect monies to our seminaries, the Global Seminary Initiative, and missionaries beginning 2020.

Montana District

9-07

To Assure Uniformity of Relationship and Asset Disposition Language in Governing Documents of Corporate Agencies of the Synod

Rationale

As the various corporations of the Synod were established, different reversionary language was used to make clear that all property of its agencies is the "Property of the Synod" (with the exception of assets held by the Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod and by any agency in a fiduciary capacity such as administered by Concordia Plan Services or certain funds held by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation; see Bylaw 1.2.1 [q]). Such variety led the 1981 LCMS convention to adopt Res. 5-07 to provide "definite procedures and policies for the establishment of additional corporations within the Synod."

More recently, legal counsel advised that it would be helpful for the unity and interests of the Synod if clear and consistent relationship and property reversionary language be included in the Articles of Incorporation of all corporate agencies, new and old. This interest resulted in the adoption by the 2004 LCMS convention of Res. 4-11, requiring the inclusion of "clear relational and property reversionary provisions in the Articles of Incorporation of all corporate agencies." Such provisions were developed by the Commission on Structure with the assistance of special legal counsel, to be included *verbatim* in the Articles of Incorporation of all corporate entities of the Synod, "not to be altered or deleted without the approval of the Synod, in convention, or the Board of Directors of the Synod."

Ongoing efforts by the CCM (including the creation of a model articles of incorporation document) to see to it that such language is found in all agency Articles of Incorporation has resulted in unforeseen difficulties and concerns, including not-for-profit corporation laws with requirements that vary from state to state. This was a subject of discussion at a joint meeting of the Council of Presidents, CCM, and Commission on Handbook on November 20, 2014, resulting in the naming of a "Resolution 4-11 Committee" to represent the three groups. The committee's assignment was to recommend next steps for the implementation, modification, or rescission of Res. 4-11 while continuing to honor the intentions of the resolution (and those of 1981 Res. 5-07).

As the committee reviewed its assignment, it requested comments regarding the resolution from the corporate agencies of the Synod while also examining how the provisions of Res. 4-11 impact LCMS organizational documents. After a series of telephone conference meetings, the committee requested the assistance of the Synod's legal counsel, Thompson Coburn LLP, to consider comments received in response to the letter to the corporate agencies, to review the interaction of Res. 4-11 with provisions of the LCMS organizational documents, and to consider a new approach to the entire matter of uniformity of reversionary language.

The end result of the Resolution 4-11 Committee's work is this overture to the 2016 LCMS convention, proposed with the assistance of LCMS legal counsel. It is consistent with existing LCMS organizational documents and advocates rescinding 2004 Res. 4-11, superseding pertinent portions of 1981 Res. 5-07, and adopting a new Bylaw 1.5.3.6.

Proposed Action by the Convention

Therefore be it

Resolved, That 2004 Res. 4-11 be herewith rescinded in lieu of the adoption of new Bylaw 1.5.3.6 by this convention to accomplish the same expectations but in a manner more amenable to legal and other requirements of the Synod's various corporate agencies; and be it further

Resolved, That those portions of 1981 Res. 5-07 pertaining to matters now addressed by the adoption of new Bylaw 1.5.3.6 be superseded by this convention action and its new Bylaw 1.5.3.6; and be it further

Resolved, That new Bylaw 1.5.3.6 be adopted as follows:

PROPOSED WORDING

1.5.3.6 Notwithstanding anything in the Bylaws to the contrary, the Articles of Incorporation or other governing documents of each agency shall contain the following provisions:

(a) That in the event of dissolution other than by direction from the Synod in convention, the assets of such agency, subject to its liabilities, shall be transferred, consistent with applicable state and federal laws, as follows:

(1) In the case of a district, university, college, or seminary, to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as may be more specifically described elsewhere in these Bylaws;

(2) In the case of a corporation formed by an agency (as defined in these Bylaws), to the agency that formed the dissolving corporation, or if such forming agency is not then in existence, to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod itself.

(b) That all provisions of its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws are subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the Bylaws, and the resolutions of the Synod in convention.

An agency may submit any concerns related to the inclusion of subsections (a) or (b) in its governing documents to the Board of Directors of the Synod, and the Board of Directors may determine to permit the removal or modification of these provisions for an affected agency.

and be it finally

Resolved, That the agencies of the Synod accommodate the requirements of this Bylaw change in time for the CCM to report the status of compliance to the 2019 convention of the Synod.

Commission on Constitutional Matters; Commission on Handbook; Board of Directors

9-08

To Address CUS and Seminary Graduate Indebtedness

WHEREAS, Some graduates from our Synod's colleges and universities have educational debts up to \$50,000; and

WHEREAS, Some graduates from our Synod's seminaries have educational debts up to \$70,000; and

WHEREAS, Graduates entering professional church work positions often receive lower wages as beginning pastors and teachers or in other church work positions; and

WHEREAS, Educational debt discourages future church workers and adds an undue financial burden to existing church workers; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod address this issue by offering church worker loans at our colleges, universities, and seminaries that are forgivable based on a set numbers of years of service in Synod ministries; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod explore means of providing financial assistance to current church workers who have high educational debt loads from Synod institutions; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod consider all other means, such as church extension loans, to assist church workers with such educational debt.

Southern Illinois District

FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

10. Stewardship: Funding the Mission

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R6

OVERTURES

(NONE)

11. Structure and Administration

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R4, R5, R8, R9, R10, R56, R57, R58,
R60, R61, R62, R64, R65

OVERTURES

11-01

To Review LCMS President's Authority

WHEREAS, The structure of the Synod over her years had become large and cumbersome and in need of restructuring for the sake of efficiency; and

WHEREAS, The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance provided proposals for this restructuring to the 2010 LCMS convention; and

WHEREAS, The 2010 convention voted to accept these proposals; and

WHEREAS, The President's Office, working in concert with the Board for National Mission and Board for International Mission (both boards established by Task Force proposals and voted into existence in 2010) have done a commendable job of implementation; and

WHEREAS, Some of the proposals have given unprecedented levels of authority to the presidential office; and

WHEREAS, Historically, the maxim has been found to be true: absolute power corrupts absolutely; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank and commend elected officials who have implemented the Blue Ribbon Task Force's structure proposals; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank and commend all who have practiced restraint with the authority given them, namely President Harrison and his office; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod establish a task force made up of the regional vice-presidents to study the issue of this authority and seek to find ways that would provide some system of checks and balances to the presidential authority; and be it finally

Resolved, That this task force would report to the 2019 Synod convention with proposals to be implemented upon convention approval.

Litchfield Circuit
Minnesota South District

11-02

To Review Powers of Synod President, Secretary, CCM, and District Presidents

WHEREAS, Concern has been expressed for many years about the constant restructuring of the Synod, which has over the years enhanced the powers of the Synod's President, Secretary, CCM, and district presidents (see, e.g., George F. Wollenburg, "An Assessment of LCMS Polity and Practice on the Basis of the Treatise," *Concordia*

Theological Quarterly 49:2-3 [April-July 1985]: 87-116, available at <http://media.ctsfw.edu/Text/ViewDetails/2076>; and John C. Wohlrabe Jr., "On Our Way to Episcopate," available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20041204103522/http://www.consensuslutheran.org/downloads/wohlabemelrosepark2004.pdf>; accessed Sept. 18, 2015); and

WHEREAS, Such enhancement of powers not only is contrary to the democratic spirit of the United States, in which our Synod works and has thrived, but is also contrary to the intention of the founders of our Synod and, indeed, Jesus Himself when He said: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them. But not so with you; rather, let the greatest among you become as one who serves" (Luke 22:25-26; quoted by Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 8; Tappert, 320-21; Kolb-Wengert, 331; McCain et al., 320-21); therefore be it

Resolved, That the national convention elect a seven-member task force to serve for three years to (1) review the powers of the Synod President, Synod Secretary, CCM, and district presidents in light of the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and C. F. W. Walther's book *Church and Office (Kirche und Amt)*; (2) review the congruence of the Bylaws of the Synod with its Constitution, understanding the Constitution to be the higher canonical authority; and (3) make specific recommendations to the 2019 convention for revisions to the Bylaws, and if necessary the Constitution, so that our Synod and district offices remain offices of service under the lordship of Christ alone; and be it further

Resolved, That the election of this convention task force shall proceed as follows: (1) the election of task force members shall take place at the 2016 convention with time provided to prepare nominations from the floor; (2) floor nominations shall be made only from: (a) persons who are already in the "nominations pool," i.e., persons whose nomination forms and information were received by the 2016 Committee for Convention Nominations and who indicated agreement to serve for at least one position, (b) persons who are presently serving in a Synod office or on a board or commission, and who were originally elected by the national Synod, and (c) persons who are completing their term of office without reelection, after serving in a Synod office or on a board or commission, and who were originally elected by the national Synod; (3) such floor nominations shall have written, or other appropriate, authorization for willingness to serve on this task force; (4) rules about holding multiple offices will not apply to service on this task force; (5) those elected shall include at least one ordained minister, one attorney, and one layman; and (6) those elected shall be inducted into office in the regular manner, according to Bylaw 3.2.4.

Holy Cross, Albany, OR; Christ, Trego, WI

11-03

To Amend Bylaw re Responsibilities of Commission on Constitutional Matters

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 states: "The Commission on Constitutional Matters shall examine the articles of incorporation, bylaws, and policy manuals of every agency of the Synod to ascertain whether they are in harmony with the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod.

(a) Agencies intending to make amendments to articles of incorporation or bylaws shall make such intentions known and receive approval from the commission in advance.

(b) The commission shall maintain a file of the articles of incorporation, bylaws, and policy manuals of all agencies of the Synod."

and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 1.2.1 (a) (1) states: “Agencies include each board, commission, council, seminary, university, college, district, Concordia Plan Services, and each synodwide corporate entity”; and

WHEREAS, Districts amend their articles of incorporation and bylaws in conventions, at which the Synod CCM is not present, and therefore the CCM cannot give “approval ... in advance” for any changes in wording of articles of incorporation or bylaws that might be made through amendments from the floor at such conventions; and

WHEREAS, The parliamentarian at the 2007 convention of the Synod ruled that, according to the Synod’s Bylaws, amendments from the floor could not be debated unless they had first been examined by the CCM, in effect allowing the CCM to kill any amendments simply by failing to examine them; and

WHEREAS, By such a reading, Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 would rule out all amendments from the floor of any district convention, thus robbing the districts of the insights of the delegates who are not on floor committees, even prohibiting districts from voting on their own bylaws if their floor committees failed to provide the CCM with advance copies of their proposed changes or if the CCM for any reason fails to approve them before the convention; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod Bylaw 3.9.2.2.3 be amended to read as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.9.2.2.3 The Commission on Constitutional Matters shall examine the articles of incorporation, bylaws, and policy manuals of every agency of the Synod to ascertain whether they are in harmony with the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod.

- (a) Agencies intending to make amendments to articles of incorporation or bylaws shall ~~make such intentions known and receive approval from submit their proposed amendments to~~ the commission ~~in advance for review~~.
- (b) The commission shall examine the proposed wording of all amendments received from these agencies and report their findings to the submitting agency, including suggestions for any corrections that the commission deems to be necessary.
- (c) After agencies amend their articles of incorporation or bylaws, they shall submit them to the commission for similar review.
- (bd) The commission shall maintain a file of the articles of incorporation, bylaws, and policy manuals of all agencies of the Synod.

Central Illinois District

11-04

To Change Bylaws re Certification and Verification of District Convention Delegates

WHEREAS, The process of registering and accrediting delegates for a district convention is cumbersome and confusing; and

WHEREAS, A major source of the confusion is that the current process requires a double registration and accreditation for every delegate. A registration several weeks prior to the convention, all properly certified and submitted to the district office, is required so that the district president can select delegates to assign to floor committees, print their names in the convention workbook, prepare registration material, and various other matters. Then, current Bylaw 4.2.2 (a) requires another set of identical credentials to be submitted to the district secretary at the opening of the convention; and

WHEREAS, Technically, according to the way the bylaw now reads, an individual who does not present the proper form at the time of registration at the convention cannot be accredited, even though forms were previously submitted to the district office; therefore be it

Resolved, That the following amendment to Bylaw 4.2.2 (a) be adopted.

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

4.2.2 The delegates of a voting congregation to a district convention shall be accredited.

- (a) ~~They shall be entitled to vote upon presenting to the secretary at the opening of the convention the proper credentials provided by the district secretary and signed by two of the congregation’s officers. To be entitled to vote, delegates shall return the proper credentials 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. These credentials shall be signed by two of the congregation’s officers. These credential forms will be provided by the district secretary and must also include all of the information necessary for voting for the President of the Synod. The district secretary shall verify the attendance of voting delegates at the district convention.~~

Board of Directors
Southern Illinois District

11-05

To Change Bylaws re District Convention Attendance as Prerequisite for Voting for Synod President

WHEREAS, The Synod’s Constitution establishes the principle that each congregation or multi-congregation parish has two votes at district conventions; and

WHEREAS, The Synod Bylaws require attendance at a district convention to be eligible to vote in the election of the Synod President; and

WHEREAS, In a situation in which a congregation’s pastoral position is vacant at the time of its district convention, that congregation, under the current Bylaws, automatically loses one of its votes in the election of the Synod President, even if that congregation has a new pastor by the time of the election of the president; and

WHEREAS, A pastor may have an emergency in the congregation or be hospitalized himself, preventing his presence at the district convention, which also results in that congregation automatically losing one of its votes for the election of the President of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, At the 2015 convention of the Southern Illinois District, 15 percent of its congregations were vacant, most of which will have a pastor by the time of the election of the Synod President, but those congregations automatically will have lost one of their votes in that election; and

WHEREAS, Following the district convention, a pastor of a district congregation who attended the district convention accepted a call to one of the vacant congregations of the district, so that unless the congregation he left successfully calls another pastor by the time of the election of the President of the Synod, both of those congregations automatically will have lost one of their votes in that election; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of the current process of electing the Synod President is to give all the congregations a voice in the election of the President; therefore be it

Resolved, That the following changes to the following bylaws be adopted:

- 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 voting list shall include

(1) the pastor of each member congregation or multi-congregation parish

(2) the lay delegate from each congregation or multi-congregation parish who was two voting delegates from each congregation in attendance at the previous district conventions and who remains a members of the congregations they that delegate represented.

(b) Following each district convention, the secretary of that district shall provide a list verifying the attendance of lay delegates to the Secretary of the Synod, including the necessary information for the Secretary of the Synod to compile the voters list.

(b)(c) If one or both the lay delegates are is unavailable, the congregations shall be provided opportunity to select a substitute voters.

(d) In the case of a congregation with more than one pastor eligible to vote, the congregation must designate to the Secretary of the Synod which pastor will cast the vote for the congregation.

3.12.2.4 Four 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, in attendance at the previous district conventions (or substitute voters selected according to Bylaw 3.12.2.3 (b)) 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, the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be retained on the ballot, and another vote shall be taken in the same manner.

Board of Directors
Southern Illinois District

11-06

To Appoint Committee to Study District Restructure

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has recently gone through a process of restructuring that seems to have focused primarily upon our Synod's headquarters; and

WHEREAS, There is reason to believe that a thorough study and suggestions for possible structural and procedural changes in the organization, workings, and operations of the Council of Presidents and the districts of the LCMS could also prove beneficial to the implementation of the mission and ministry that the Lord has given to this church body; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention direct the President of the Synod to appoint a blue-ribbon committee to investigate the aforementioned issues and have that committee report to the 2019 LCMS convention its findings and suggestions for discussion and possible action.

Immanuel
Orange, CA

11-07

To Standardize and Clarify Procedures for Elections at Synod and District Conventions

WHEREAS, Article VIII C of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) specifies that "all matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God.

All other matters shall be decided by a majority vote. In case of a tie vote the President may cast the deciding vote"; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS Bylaws contain regulations for elections in Sections 3.12.2.6 (b), 3.12.2.7, 3.12.4.2, 4.7.1, and 4.7.3; and

WHEREAS, These Bylaws which regulate the same activity, namely the election of officers and other elective positions at Synod and district conventions, are similar but not entirely consistent in language or substance; and

WHEREAS, It has been commonly practiced at conventions of the Synod and some districts that voting delegates cast ballots with multiple names when multiple positions of the same status are to be filled, even though this procedure is not currently prescribed in the Bylaws and in fact contradicts them; and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws currently mandate different regulations regarding the removal of candidates from second and succeeding ballots for efficiency; and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws currently make no provision for tie votes, which could lead to confusion, poor electoral procedure, and violation of the electoral principles of the Constitution and Bylaws; and

WHEREAS, The advent of electronic voting makes it possible for voters to cast successive ballots expediently; and

WHEREAS, Bylaws 4.7.1 and 4.7.3 are confusing regarding the election of district regional officers and district board of directors members; and

WHEREAS, Standard, uniform, and clear regulations for Synod and district elections will promote good electoral practice and give voting delegates the security of knowing that convention elections are fair; therefore be it

Resolved, That at the 2016 LCMS convention and at all future meetings of the same, including district conventions, all balloting be conducted for only one position at a time; and be it further

Resolved, that a new section be inserted at the beginning of Bylaw section 3.12 as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.12.1 All elections at conventions and meetings of the Synod shall follow a common procedure and be regulated as follows:

(a) All ballots shall be for the election of one candidate only.

(b) A majority of all votes cast shall be required for election.

(c) A candidate who receives a majority of all the votes cast on the first ballot or any succeeding ballot shall be declared elected.

(d) When no candidate receives a majority of all the votes cast on a ballot, one or more candidates shall be removed from the ballot. If the sum of all the votes for a candidate along with those receiving as many or fewer votes is less than each of the candidates receiving more votes, that candidate is removed along with those receiving fewer votes. If there are no such candidates, then the voters shall elect, by majority vote, a candidate to remove from among those receiving the fewest votes. Finally, if the voters are unable to reach a majority decision, the President of the Synod shall act to remove one of the candidates receiving the fewest votes.

(e) After removing one or more candidates, another vote shall be taken.

(f) The tally of the votes cast for each candidate shall be announced after each ballot.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.6 (b) be amended as follows:

...

(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. The First Vice-President shall be elected from the five nominees se-

lected by the President-elect according to the regulations in Bylaw 3.12.1.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.12.2.7 (e)–(g) be amended as follows:

...

(e) Voting delegates to the national convention shall be entitled to vote for one of the candidates from each 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. All voting delegates to the national convention shall be entitled to vote for each regional vice-president. The elections shall proceed according to the regulations in Bylaw 3.12.1.

(f) Balloting shall continue with the candidate receiving the least number of votes eliminated until one candidate from each region has received a majority of the votes cast. Upon the election of the regional vice-presidents, a series of elections shall be held for ranking the vice-presidents by separate ballots. These elections shall proceed according to the regulations in Bylaw 3.12.1.

(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.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.12.4.2 (d)–(f) be amended as follows:

...

(d) A majority of all votes cast shall be required for election to all elective offices and elective board positions. Candidates receiving a majority on the first ballot shall be declared elected. All elections for offices and elective members of boards and commissions shall proceed according to the regulations in Bylaw 3.12.1.

(e) Except in the elections of the First Vice-President, regional vice-presidents, and regional board members, 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.

(f) The tally of the votes cast for each candidate shall be announced after each ballot in all elections.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.7.1 be amended as follows:

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. Each district may adopt regulations for the nomination of its president, vice-presidents, and regional officers or regional board of directors members, as long as these provisions do not conflict with the Bylaws of the Synod. Each district may adopt regulations concerning the constituencies of any regional officers or board members. The election and/or ranking of any of the aforementioned positions shall proceed according to the regulations in Bylaw 3.12.1. The election of any district officer or member of the board of directors must be ratified by a majority vote of the entire voting assembly of the district convention. The district president shall fulfill the role of President in tie-breaking, unless he is a candidate, in which case the highest ranking vice-president who is not a candidate shall fulfill that role.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.7.3 be amended as follows:

4.7.3 A majority of all votes cast by the voting delegates of a district convention shall be required in every election to all elective offices and elective board positions. Every election for positions not mentioned in Bylaw 4.7.1 shall proceed according to the regulations in Bylaw 3.12.1.

The district president shall fulfill the role of President in tie-breaking. Except in the election of the president and the vice-presidents, the following regulations shall apply:

(a) ~~Candidates receiving a majority on the first ballot shall be declared elected.~~

(b) ~~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.~~

(c) ~~In every election balloting shall continue until every position has been filled by majority vote.~~

and be it finally

Resolved, That the Secretary of the LCMS communicate these Bylaw changes to the secretaries of the districts of the LCMS in order to promote proper electoral procedure across the LCMS.

Circuit 9, Atlantic District; St. Paul, Cincinnati, OH

11-08

To Standardize and Clarify Procedures for Elections at Circuit Forums

WHEREAS, Article VIII C of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) specifies that “all matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God. All other matters shall be decided by a majority vote. In case of a tie vote the President may cast the deciding vote”; and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws of the LCMS contain regulations for circuit elections in Bylaws 3.1.2.1, 5.2.2, and 5.3.3; and

WHEREAS, These Bylaws are incomplete and not consistent with the practice of elections at Synod and district conventions; and

WHEREAS, Standard, uniform, and clear regulations for circuit elections will promote good electoral practice and give voting representatives the security of knowing that the elections are fair; 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 the procedures established below established policy and procedure. The secretary of the district shall provide each circuit visitor with instruction concerning the regulations for elections in these Bylaws and suggested procedures for their implementation.

(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 ~~ensure~~ ensure efficiency and accuracy, including the use of mechanical, electronic, or other methods of casting, recording, or tabulating votes. The electoral circuit shall select an elections committee consisting of a pastor, who shall not be the circuit visitor, and a layman. This committee shall be responsible for supervising the election and shall serve as tellers for the elections.

(c) The privilege of voting shall be exercised by one pastor and one layperson from each member congregation of the electoral circuit, both of whom shall have been selected in the manner prescribed by the

congregation. Multiple parishes shall be entitled to a lay vote from each member congregation.

- (d) All pastors who are not advisory members under Article V B of the Constitution and not specific ministry pastors shall be eligible for election.

~~(1) A preliminary ballot may be held for the purpose of setting a slate of candidates. If such a ballot is held, each~~Each voter may write in the names of two pastors on the preliminaryinitial ballot. The ~~five~~three pastors (or more, in case of a tie vote) who receive the highest number of votes in ~~the~~this preliminary ballot shall constitute the slate of candidates for the pastoral delegate~~be placed on the next ballot.~~

~~(2) Each voter shall now vote for only one candidate. Balloting shall continue with the lowest candidate being removed from each succeeding ballot until one pastor shall have received a simple majority of all votes cast, whereupon he shall be declared the pastoral delegate. Once the slate of candidates is complete, the election shall proceed according to the regulations in Bylaw 3.12.1.* If the electoral circuit is not conducting an in-person meeting, it may choose to simulate the procedure in Bylaw 3.12.1* using ranked balloting. The circuit visitor(s) shall fulfill the role of President in tie-breaking.~~

(3) The congregation or congregations served by the elected pastoral delegate shall be removed from consideration for supplying any other voting delegate or alternate for that particular convention.

- (e) Prior to the meeting of the electoral circuit, each congregation may nominate one layperson; ~~either from its congregation or from the circuit from any congregation in the circuit.~~ These names must be submitted to the circuit visitor(s) 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) A preliminary ballot may be held for the purpose of setting a slate of candidates. If such ballot is held, each~~Each voter may write in the name of two of the remaining lay nominees on the preliminaryinitial ballot. The ~~five~~three laypersons (or more, in case of a tie vote) who receive~~received~~ the highest number of votes in ~~the~~this preliminary ballot shall constitute the slate of candidates for the lay delegate~~be placed on the next ballot.~~

~~(2) Each voter shall now vote for only one candidate. Balloting shall continue with the lowest candidate being removed from each succeeding ballot until one layperson shall have received a simple majority of all votes cast, whereupon he/she shall be declared the lay delegate. Once the slate of candidates is complete, the election shall proceed according to the regulations in Bylaw 3.12.1.* If the electoral circuit is not conducting an in-person meeting, it may choose to simulate the procedure in Bylaw 3.12.1* using ranked balloting. The circuit visitor(s) shall fulfill the role of President in tie-breaking.~~

(3) The congregation from which the lay delegate has been elected shall then be removed from consideration for supplying any alternates to that particular convention.

- (f) All other pastors who received votes in the initial write-in ballot were in the original slate of candidates determined in Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d) (1), except those who were eliminated through the election of the lay delegate, shall be eligible for election as the alternate. If fewer than three candidates remain, then at least three candidates shall be chosen from among all eligible pastors by a preliminary ballot, as in Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d) (1).

~~(1) Each voter shall now vote for only one candidate. The election of the alternate pastoral delegate shall proceed as in Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (d) (2).~~

(2) Balloting shall continue with the lowest candidate being removed from each succeeding ballot until one pastor shall have received a simple majority of all votes cast, whereupon he shall be declared the alternate pastoral delegate.

(3) The congregation or congregations served by him shall be removed from consideration for supplying the ~~remaining lay~~ alternate ~~alternate lay~~ delegate.

- (g) All lay nominees except those who have been disqualified through the procedures listed above shall be eligible for election as the alternate lay delegate. The election of the alternate shall follow the same procedure as in paragraph (f) above.

(h) All four persons elected shall come from four different parishes.

(i) The circuit visitor(s) shall report the results of the election to the secretary of the district in writing immediately after said election.

(j) If neither the delegate nor the alternate (pastoral or lay) can serve, the vacancy shall be filled by the district president in consultation with the respective circuit visitor(s).

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 5.2.2 (c)–(d) be amended as follows:

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.

...

- (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). The secretary of the district shall provide each circuit visitor with instruction concerning the regulations for elections in these Bylaws and suggested procedures for their implementation.

~~(d) The circuit shall select an elections committee consisting of a pastor, who shall not be the circuit visitor, and a layman. This committee shall be responsible for supervising the election and serve as tellers for the elections.~~

~~(e)~~ All nominated pastors serving congregations and emeriti pastors shall be eligible for election in accordance with section 4.3 of these Bylaws.

(1) Following presentations of pertinent information regarding each pastor as listed in Bylaw 3.12.3.6 (c) and circuit visitor responsibilities as provided hereafter in this bylaw, ~~each voter shall submit the names of two pastors on the initial ballot the voting representatives shall nominate a circuit visitor for ratification by the succeeding district convention.~~

(2) ~~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. Each voter shall vote for only one candidate. If the number of nominees for circuit visitor exceeds five, a preliminary ballot may be held on which each voting representative submits the names of at most two nominated pastors. If such a ballot is held, the slate of candidates for circuit visitor shall consist of the five pastors (or more in case of a tie vote) who receive the highest number of votes on the preliminary ballot.~~

(3) ~~Balloting shall continue with the lowest candidate being removed from each succeeding ballot until one pastor shall have received a simple majority of all votes cast, who shall be declared the nominee. Once the slate of candidates is complete, the election shall proceed according to the regulations in Bylaw 3.12.1.* If the electoral circuit is not conducting an in-person meeting, it may choose to simulate the procedure in Bylaw 3.12.1* using ranked balloting. The circuit visitor shall fulfill the role of President in tie-breaking.~~

(fe) ...

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 5.3.3 be amended as follows:

5.3.3 The circuit forum will meet at least once triennially to elect circuit delegates to the national convention. It shall elect the pastoral and lay delegates and their alternates to the national convention of the Synod according to the regulations ~~of the Synod in Bylaw 3.1.2.1~~. The lay delegate shall, upon election, serve through the triennium following the next convention as an advisory member of the circuit forum.

and be it finally

Resolved, That the Secretary of the LCMS communicate these Bylaw changes to the secretaries of the districts of the LCMS and circuit visitors of the circuits of the LCMS in order to promote proper electoral procedure across the LCMS.

Circuit 9, Atlantic District; Circuit 3, Atlantic District

* Note: References to Bylaw 3.12.1 are presently incorrect, so should be changed depending on whatever the number of Overture X11-05-01 ultimately turns out to be.

11-09

To Increase Number of Candidates for Synod President and Streamline Election Process

WHEREAS, The President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod serves the entire Synod; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.12.2.1 currently limits the slate of candidates for President to three individuals; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.12.2.6 and Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (c) establish the number of candidates for First Vice-President and Regional Vice-President to be five; and

WHEREAS, The benefit of having voting delegates from each congregation cast ballots for Synod President is diminished by reducing the slate of nominees; and

WHEREAS, Having multiple ballots by electronic means could be costly to the Synod and confusing to voting delegates; and

WHEREAS, In an electronic format it is not difficult for voting delegates to indicate an order of preference among several candidates; and

WHEREAS, The possibility for superior election procedure exists by using fully-ranked voting; and

WHEREAS, The procedure outlined below is even more consistent with the principles of election by majority vote and allowing voters to vote according to conscience without reference to political tactics than the current procedure; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.12.2.1 The candidates for the office of President shall be the ~~three~~five ordained ministers who received the highest number of votes in the nominating process and who consent to serve if elected... ;

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.4 be amended as follows:

3.12.2.4 Four 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 in attendance at the previous district conventions (or substitute voters selected according to Bylaw 3.12.2.3 (b)) to vote for ~~one of the candidates for the~~ President of the Synod. 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, the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be retained on the ballot, and another vote shall be taken in the same manner. ~~The election shall be conducted according to the regulations below.~~

(a) ~~Each voter shall provide an ordered list of the candidates according to his preference. It shall be assumed that if a voter provides a partial list that he prefers all the candidates on his list to the unlisted candidates but has no preference among the unlisted candidates.~~

(b) ~~When the balloting is concluded, each pair of candidates shall be compared and the smallest set of candidates who would win a head-to-head election with all the other candidates shall be identified and all the other candidates removed from succeeding ballots.~~

(c) ~~If there is exactly one candidate remaining, he shall be declared elected, having received a majority vis-à-vis every other candidate.~~

(d) ~~If there are at least two candidates, the regulations in Bylaw 3.12.1* shall be followed by simulated ballots. If the Synod President is among the candidates, the highest-ranking vice-president who is not a candidate shall serve his role for the purposes of tie-breaking.~~

(e) ~~The Committee on Elections shall ensure the accuracy of the system and audit the results in detail.~~

Circuit 9, Atlantic District; Circuit 3, Atlantic District; St. Paul, Cincinnati, OH

* Note: References to Bylaw 3.12.1 are presently incorrect, so should be changed depending on whatever the number of Overture X11-05-01 ultimately turns out to be.

11-10

To Strengthen Committee on Elections and Form District Committees on Elections

WHEREAS, Elections are an integral part of Synod and district conventions and allow the Synod to function through fairly elected representatives; and

WHEREAS, The Committee on Elections is responsible for the supervision of elections at Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, Each district is responsible for many elections at district conventions; and

WHEREAS, The theory of elections can be complicated and counterintuitive; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.4 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.12.4 Prior to the convention of the Synod, the President shall appoint a Committee on Elections, which shall make the necessary arrangements for the elections, shall be responsible for the preparation and distribution of ballots, and shall supervise the elections and the tabulation of the votes.

(a) The President shall designate a chairman for the committee.

(b) ~~The committee shall include at least one mathematician, political scientist, or other member who is familiar with the details of election theory.~~

(bc) The Secretary of the Synod shall provide the chairman with a current manual of suggested election procedures.

(ed) The committee shall be empowered to adopt procedures and methods that will ~~insure~~ensure efficiency and accuracy, including the use

of mechanical, electronic, or other methods of casting, recording, or tabulating votes.

- (de) All ballots in each election shall be preserved by the chairman of the committee until the close of the convention and shall then be destroyed.

and be it further

Resolved, That a new subsection be inserted in Bylaw section 4.7:

4.7.3 Prior to the district convention, the district president shall appoint a Committee on Elections, which shall make the necessary arrangements for the elections, shall be responsible for the preparation and distribution of ballots, and shall supervise the elections and the tabulation of the votes.

- (a) The district president shall designate a chairman for the committee.
 (b) The committee shall consist of no fewer than three members, at least one of whom shall be a minister of religion—ordained, and at least one layperson. It may contain as many other members as the district president deems expedient.
 (c) The secretary of the district shall provide the committee with instruction concerning the regulations for elections in these Bylaws and the Bylaws of the district and suggested procedures for their implementation.
 (d) The committee shall be empowered to adopt procedures and methods that will ensure efficiency and accuracy, including the use of mechanical, electronic, or other methods of casting, recording, or tabulating votes.
 (e) All ballots in each election shall be preserved by the chairman of the committee until the close of the convention and shall then be destroyed.

Circuit 9, Atlantic District; Circuit 3, Atlantic District; St. Paul, Cincinnati, OH

11-11

To Allow Each Region to Elect Its Vice-President

WHEREAS, The current Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have the entire Synod convention vote for regional vice-presidents based on a slate of nominations garnered from the individual regions; and

WHEREAS, Each region should be able to elect a vice-president of its own choosing; and

WHEREAS, The regional vice-presidents are ranked by the Synod in convention in order to determine an order of succession to the presidency; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention amend the Bylaws of the Synod to allow each region of the Synod to conduct its own election for its regional vice-president in a manner best determined by the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the resultant vice-presidents of this process then be ranked as in the past for order of succession by the Synod convention.

Trinity, Utica, MI; First, Hanford, CA; New England District

11-12

To Eliminate Distinctions between Visitation and Electoral Circuits

WHEREAS, LCMS Bylaw 3.1.2 (a) states: “An electoral circuit shall consist of ... 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 LCMS Constitution or Bylaws where confirmed membership is taken into account; and

WHEREAS, The Church is not to be measured by “confirmed 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 (AC VIII; *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. III, p. 409; Matt. 18:20); and

WHEREAS, All congregations, regardless of numbers of confirmed 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 (*Kirche und Amt*, Part 1, Theses IV, VI, VII; Part 2, Thesis VII), e.g.:

As visible congregations that still have the Word and the Sacraments essentially according to God’s Word and 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] (Part 1, VII);

and

WHEREAS, All congregations, regardless of number of confirmed 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 LCMS, and equally entitled to the benefits of Synod membership, nor are there any confirmed membership requirements stated for member congregations in the Synod (LCMS Constitution, Articles V, VI, VII; Bylaws 1.3.1, 1.3.4, 1.3.4.1, 1.3.5, 2.1.1, 2.2.1, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.4.1); and

WHEREAS, All member congregations of the Synod, regardless of number of confirmed members, are considered voting members of the Synod (Constitution Art. V; Bylaw 1.2.1 [x]); and

WHEREAS, The only individual persons who are members of the Synod are “ministers of religion—ordained” and “ministers of religion—commissioned” (Bylaws 1.2.1 [I], 2.6.1–3); and

WHEREAS, Confirmed members of a congregation are not members of Synod and do not fall under the ecclesiastical authority of district or Synod, but remain under the authority of the congregation; nor do the Constitution and Bylaws or the Synod’s dispute resolution process (except for the exceptions specified in Bylaw 1.10.2) hold any authority over individual communicant members of congregations (Bylaws 1.1, 1.3.1, 1.10.2); and

WHEREAS, The requirement of at least 1,500 confirmed members in an electoral circuit is inconsistent with our doctrine of the Church (see above); and

WHEREAS, Many congregations, especially in the rural districts of our Synod, are dwindling in numbers of confirmed members, yet there are still “two or three” gathered in the name of Christ within them; and

WHEREAS, The requirement of at least 1,500 confirmed members in an electoral circuit is becoming an increasing burden in many of our districts, requiring electoral circuits of ever-increasing geographic size; and

WHEREAS, The increasing geographic distances required to form electoral circuits of at least 1,500 confirmed members is becoming an obstacle to efficient communication within the circuit, especially with the expectation that electors visit the congregations of the circuit, which could require significant travel, and since many of the older and/or isolated rural members of our congregations do not have email, cell phones, or other means of electronic communication; 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; and

WHEREAS, These personal and congregational relationships often extend to the auxiliaries of Synod (LWML and ILL) operating within the circuits, which relationships are also disrupted when there are changes to the formation of circuits; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS Bylaws allow all congregations/parishes, regardless of the number of confirmed members, equal voice and vote in the nomination and election of the LCMS President and vice-presidents (Bylaws 3.12.2 [b] and 3.12.2.7 [a]); and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.1.2 (b) allows the Synod President to make exceptions to the requirements of electoral circuits, which has been done in the past and caused much turmoil and dissent within Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the distinction between electoral and visitation circuits be eliminated and the Bylaws be amended to reflect this change; and be it further

Resolved, That the confirmed membership requirements for circuits be eliminated; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.2 be amended as follows: Voting delegates shall consist of one pastor and one layman from each electoral circuit; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.1.2 (a) and (b) be eliminated; and be it finally

Resolved, That a new Bylaw 5.1.3 be added which shall read: A circuit shall consist of 7 to 20 congregations and at least 7 pastors, except during pastoral vacancy in any member congregation(s).

St. Peters, Wentworth, SD; Zion, White, SD; First English, Aurora, SD; Trinity, Spencer, SD; St. Martin's, Alexandria, SD; West Point Circuit, Nebraska District

11-13

To Create Term Limits for Synod Elected Officers

WHEREAS, The Synod has been served by the multiple gifts and abilities of those who serve it; and

WHEREAS, Term limits provide opportunity for fresh perspectives and use of different gifts and abilities; and

WHEREAS, There is no uniformity of practice in regard to term limits for the various elected offices in the districts of the Synod and those offices of the Synod elected or appointed when Synod is in convention; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Nebraska District memorialize the LCMS to limit the terms of the officers (President, First Vice-President, regional vice-presidents, and Secretary) elected by the Synod in convention to not exceed a total of 12 years; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.2.4.1 be amended to read:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.2.4.1 ~~Those holding the~~ The offices of President, 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 elected terms without limitation as to reelection.

(a) Such persons may become eligible again for election to the same office after an interval of three or more years.

(b) More than one-half of a term shall be regarded as a full term under limited tenure rules.

(c) Any officer who is ineligible for reelection may be elected or appointed to another position.

(da) If the President, First Vice-President, regional vice-presidents, or Secretary are not reelected or do not stand for reelection, they shall continue to receive full salary for a period of six (6) months while rendering transitional service.

(eb) Such service and salary will cease at the time such person accepts another full-time position.

(fe) 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.

Nebraska District

11-14

To Determine How Midterm Vacancies of Regional Vice-President Positions Are Filled

WHEREAS, The nomination and election of the regional vice-presidents is a regional action; and

WHEREAS, All candidates on the ballot have been thoroughly vetted; and

WHEREAS, It is understandable that life changes and the call to a new ministry outside of the region can create a vacancy in a regional position; therefore be it

Resolved, That in the event that a regional vice-president position becomes vacant, the Synod President shall appoint as a replacement the candidate for that regional vice-president position who received the next greatest number of votes from the delegates of that region at the last Synod convention. If that man is unable or unwilling to serve, the President shall appoint the candidate with the next greatest number of votes, and so on down the line until a regional vice-president has been appointed. If none of the candidates from the last Synod convention are able or willing to serve, the Synod President shall appoint as vice-president the minister of religion—ordained from the clergy roster of the Synod with residence in the region who is recommended by a majority of the district presidents within the region; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod's Bylaws be amended to reflect such a change.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

11-15

To Alter Method of Electing Synod Regional Vice-Presidents

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 3.12.2.7 states:

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. (This shall also be the process used for all other regional elections.)

(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).

(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.
- (e) Voting delegates to the national convention shall be entitled to vote for one of the candidates from each 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.
- (f) Balloting shall continue with the candidate receiving the least number of votes eliminated until one candidate from each region has received a majority of the votes cast.
- (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.

and

WHEREAS, The current method of electing the Synod's regional vice-presidents, as found in Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (e), requires the vote of the entire assembly of delegates to determine the vice-president for each and every region; and

WHEREAS, In this method of electing the Synod's regional vice-presidents, the vice-president favored by the congregations of a specific region may not be elected, thereby depriving the congregations of the specific region the right to choose their own regional vice-president; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.7 is amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

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. (This shall also be the process used for all other regional elections.)

- (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).
- (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 delegates to the Synod convention from that geographical region shall select by majority vote each the regional vice-president for their own geographical region.
- (d) No opportunity shall be provided for additional nominations from the floor of the convention.
- (e) Voting delegates to the national convention from each region shall be entitled to vote for one of the candidates from each the region to which the delegate belongs. Delegates may not vote for vice-presidential candidates from regions to which they do not belong. 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.
- (f) Balloting shall continue with the candidate receiving the least number of votes eliminated until one candidate from each region has received a majority of the votes cast by the delegates from his region.
- (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 from all geographical regions determining the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth vice-presidents in line of succession.
- (h) In the event a regional vice-president's position becomes vacant, the President of the Synod shall appoint as a replacement the candidate for that regional vice-president's position who received the next greatest number of votes from the delegates of that region at the last

Synod convention. If that man is unable or unwilling to serve, the President shall appoint the candidate with the next greatest number of votes and so on down the line until a regional vice-president has been appointed. If none of the candidates from the last Synod convention are able or willing to serve, the President of the Synod shall appoint as vice-president the minister of religion—ordained from the clergy roster of the Synod with residence in the region who is recommended by a majority of the district presidents within the region.

Board of Directors, Southeastern District; California-Nevada-Hawaii District; First, Hanford, CA; Redeemer, Fresno, CA

11-16

To Allow Each LCMS Region to Elect Its Own Vice-President

WHEREAS, A "region," as defined by the Bylaws of the Synod (Bylaw 1.2.1 [F]), is "a division of the Synod for the purpose of regional elections"; and

WHEREAS, The current method of electing the Synod's regional vice-presidents (Bylaw 3.12.2.7 [e]) requires a vote of the entire assembly of delegates to the national Synod convention to determine the vice-president for each and every region; and

WHEREAS, The number of delegates sent to the national convention may differ from region to region, creating unequal voting constituencies; and

WHEREAS, The members of one region may not have understanding or clarity regarding the issues faced by the members of other regions; and

WHEREAS, The members of a region have a vested interest in the election of their own vice-president for the purpose of being accurately represented at the national level; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention amend Bylaw 3.12.2.7 to allow those voting delegates from each of the Synod's five regions the privilege of voting only for the vice-president of their respective region; and be it further

Resolved, That the regional vice-presidents elected according to this amended process then be ranked for order of succession by the Synod convention as stipulated in the Bylaws.

Board of Directors, Northwest District; Florida-Georgia District

11-17

To Request CCM Review of Constitutionality of Bylaw 3.12.2.4

WHEREAS, There is a possible conflict between Art. V A of the LCMS Constitution and Bylaw 3.12.2.4 regarding the disenfranchisement of congregations not attending district conventions; therefore be it

Resolved, That the CCM review the constitutionality of Bylaw 3.12.2.4.

Michigan District

11-18

To Clarify Regional Residence/Membership Requirements

WHEREAS, The *Handbook* requires that regional elections are governed by the location of the candidate; and

WHEREAS, There is a conflict in the wording of Bylaw 3.12.1 (b), “For purposes of regional elections, individuals will be considered *a part of the geographical region where their congregational membership is held* [emphasis added]. Canadian congregations will be placed as a whole into the region which the Board of Directors and the Council of Presidents deem appropriate” and Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (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” [emphasis added]; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (a) be amended to read:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.12.2.7 ...

(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 who hold congregational membership with residence in its designated region as candidates for regional vice-president.”

Board of Directors
Kansas District

11-19

To Clarify Function of Committee for Convention Nominations in Interim between Issuing Final Report and Convention

WHEREAS, The Committee for Convention Nominations (CCN) issues its “final report at least five months prior to the convention” (Bylaw 3.12.3.6 [b]); and

WHEREAS, “Final report” seems to imply that the CCN’s work is finished and no further action is expected; and

WHEREAS, Subsequent events and situations occur which require modifications in the slate of candidates provided by the CCN; and

WHEREAS, Reconvening of the CCN in the interim is time-consuming, cumbersome, and expensive; and

WHEREAS, The nominations files are kept in the Office of the Secretary of Synod and are not accessible from a distance; and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws do not seem to speak to handling of such changes when required, or possibly do not permit action except by the plenary CCN; and

WHEREAS, Previous CCNs have had to improvise solutions to this situation, so it needs clarification; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Bylaw 3.2.5 committee selected by the CCN be empowered to act on behalf of and in the name of the CCN for actions needed subsequent to the issuing of the CCN’s final report in February; and be it further

Resolved, That this Bylaw 3.2.5 committee be empowered to consult with any or all members of the plenary CCN if said 3.2.5 committee, in its sole judgement, deems it prudent to do so.

Mt. Pleasant Circuit Forum
Iowa District East

11-20

To Seat Entire Committee for Convention Nominations at Convention

WHEREAS, All floor committees except for the Committee for Convention Nominations (CCN) are comprised of delegates who are badged and seated; and

WHEREAS, The ad hoc CCN members are elected by their districts in convention (Bylaw 3.12.3.1) and are not necessarily official delegates; and

WHEREAS, The CCN may be called upon for actions during the convention; and

WHEREAS, The entire CCN should deal with such requests; and

WHEREAS, The CCN is the only committee where some members come as “visitors” at their own expense (or do not come at all) and are not recognized with badges; therefore be it

Resolved, That any member of the CCN who is not present in another official capacity be invited and badged; and be it further

Resolved, That such persons be seated in the advisory section; and be it finally

Resolved, That such persons’ expenses be paid by the Synod.

Mt. Pleasant Circuit
Iowa District East

11-21

To Amend Bylaws re District Convention Attendance as Prerequisite for Voting for President of Synod

WHEREAS, The Constitution establishes the principle that each congregation or multi-congregation parish has two votes at conventions of the district; and

WHEREAS, The current Bylaws of the Synod require attendance at a district convention to be eligible to vote in the election of the President of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, In the situation in which a congregation is vacant at the time of its district convention, under the current Bylaws of the Synod that congregation automatically loses one of its votes for the election of the President of the Synod, even if that congregation has a new pastor by the time of the election of the President; and

WHEREAS, A pastor may have an emergency in the congregation or be hospitalized himself, preventing his presence at the district convention; this also results in that congregation automatically losing one of its votes for the election of the President of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, At the 2015 Southern Illinois District convention, 15 percent of the congregations were vacant (most of which will have a pastor by the time of the election of the President of the Synod), but those congregations automatically lost one of their votes in that election; and

WHEREAS, Following the 2015 convention of the Southern Illinois District, a pastor of a district congregation who attended the district convention accepted a call to one of the vacant congregations of the district, which means that unless the congregation he left is filled by the time of the election of the President of the Synod, both of those congregations will have automatically lost one of their votes in that election; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of the current process of electing the President of the Synod is to give all the congregations a voice in the election of the president; therefore be it

Resolved, That the changes to the following bylaws be adopted:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

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 voting list shall include

(1) The pastor of each member congregation or multi-congregation parish

(2) The lay delegate from each congregation or multi-congregation parish who was two voting delegates from each congregation in attendance at the previous district conventions and who remains a members of the congregations they that delegate represented.

(b) Following each district convention, the secretary of that district shall provide a list verifying the attendance of lay delegates to the Secretary of the Synod, including the necessary information for the Secretary of the Synod to compile the voters' list.

(bc) If one or both the lay delegates are unavailable, the congregations shall be provided opportunity to select a substitute voters.

(d) In the case of a congregations with more than one pastor eligible to vote, the congregation must designate to the Secretary of the Synod which pastor will cast the vote for the congregation.

3.12.2.4 Four 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 ~~in attendance at the previous district conventions (or substitute voters selected according to Bylaw 3.12.2.3 [b]), 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, the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be retained on the ballot, and another vote shall be taken in the same manner.

Board of Directors
Southern Illinois District

11-22**To Change Election of Regional Vice-Presidents****Preamble**

In 2010, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) voted to restructure itself. In the ensuing years, that restructuring has been implemented, including the regionalization of LCMS vice-presidents, except for the First Vice-President. Currently, the LCMS regional vice-presidents are elected by a majority vote of the entire convention. It is understood that the LCMS regional vice-president is an “elected advisor to the President” (Bylaw 3.3.2) and “shall be responsible to the President for the performance of [his] duties” (Bylaw 3.3.2.3). The LCMS regional vice-presidents are elected to represent the LCMS throughout their regions.

WHEREAS, An LCMS regional vice-president is to represent the LCMS throughout his region; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS regional vice-president, in order to properly execute his duties, must be familiar with and responsive to the peculiar issues of the region he serves; therefore be it

Resolved, That the election of LCMS regional vice-presidents be limited solely to those duly qualified delegates representing the geographic region the regional vice-president would represent; and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (e) be changed to read:

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. (This shall also be the process used for all other regional elections.)

...

(e) Voting delegates to the national convention shall be entitled to vote for one of the candidates from each the region they represent. 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.

Atlantic District

11-23**To Change Nomination Process for Elected District Offices**

WHEREAS, Districts may adopt bylaws, regulations, and resolutions, including the conducting of district conventions, provided they are not contrary to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod (Bylaw 4.1.1.2); and

WHEREAS, The Committee for Convention Nominations is required to select at least two candidates and at least one alternate for elective offices prior to each convention (Bylaw 3.12.3.6 [a]); and

WHEREAS, District conventions currently are to be governed by the bylaws adopted by the Synod for its conventions (Bylaw 4.2.1 [a]); and

WHEREAS, This nomination requirement for at least two candidates and at least one alternate places an undue burden on district nomination committees if they do not receive nominations from the congregations; and

WHEREAS, The Synod allows a process for amending the slate of nominations from the floor of the convention (Bylaw 3.12.3.7 [a-f]); therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention modify Bylaw 4.2.1 (a) to read:

PROPOSED WORDING

4.2.1 Conventions of the districts shall afford opportunities for worship ...

(a) The conventions of the districts shall be governed by the bylaws adopted by the Synod for its conventions, insofar as these may be applicable, with the exception that district nomination committees are required to nominate at least one candidate to serve each office to be elected in district convention.

and be it further

Resolved, That like the Synod, each district should develop and publish a procedure for amending the slate of nominations from the floor of their convention.

Oklahoma District

11-24**To Change Formation of Electoral Circuits**

WHEREAS, The Synod divides itself into districts and allows each district to create circuits, and the criteria to create districts and circuits are determined by the Synod in convention (Bylaw 1.3.2); and

WHEREAS, Electoral circuits are established for the sole purpose of sending representative voting delegates to Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, District boards of directors are authorized to determine electoral circuits (Bylaw 3.1.2 [a]); and

WHEREAS, Electoral circuits meet at the call of the circuit visitor to elect the circuit's voting delegates, and the circuit visitor is responsible for conducting those meetings (Bylaw 3.1.2.1 [a, e, and i]); and

WHEREAS, Not all visitation circuits meet the criteria of being an electoral circuit (currently set at 7 to 20 member congregations, and aggregate confirmed membership ranging from 1,500 to 10,000), so that electoral circuits are by definition not necessarily equivalent to visitation circuits (Bylaw 3.1.2 [a]); and

WHEREAS, Visitation circuits consisting of small or geographically distant congregations may find it difficult to reach the Synod's current criteria for an electoral circuit; and

WHEREAS, Congregations are the basic units of the Synod (Bylaw 1.3.1), and congregations, not circuits, are members of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That district boards of directors be allowed to reassign one or more congregations from one or more adjacent visitation circuit(s) for the purpose of establishing electoral circuits that meet the criteria for electing delegates to the Synod's conventions; and be it further

Resolved, That the number of electoral circuits within a district would not exceed the number of visitation circuits in that district.

Oklahoma District

11-25

To Establish Board for International Mission Representation at Synod Conventions

WHEREAS, 2013 Bylaw 3.1.4.1 (a) states, "Each board or commission shall be represented [at Synod conventions] by its chairman or another board or commission member and by its principal staff person"; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Bylaw 3.8.3.4 states, "In carrying out its mission responsibilities, the Office of International Mission shall receive 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 Board for International Mission"; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Bylaw 3.8.3.5 states, "All staff [of the Office of International Mission] shall be responsible and accountable for their activities to the President of the Synod (Constitution Art. XI B 1-4) between conventions of the Synod and ultimately to the Synod in convention (Constitution Art. XI A 1-2)"; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Bylaw 1.4.6 states, "Each staff [of the Synod] develops procedures, recommends and reviews programs and ministries, manages programs, and recommends policy and program modifications. Staff implements decisions in accordance with approved policy; (a) staff is responsible to the Synod at the national or district level in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod at the national or district level, resolutions of the respective convention, and the policies of a district or any other agency to which it is responsible; (b) staffs ordinarily serve as the liaison between the national and district levels. Staffs at the national and district levels consult with one another in developing program proposals; and (c) each chief executive or executive director shall report on staff activities and recommendations to the national Synod, district, agency, or officer to which that executive is responsible and, as requested, to the president of the district or of the Synod"; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Bylaw 3.4.3.1 states, "The Chief Mission Officer shall provide staff and other resource(s) to the Board for National Mission and the Board for International Mission" and serves as an

advisory representative at conventions as the "principal staff person" for the Board for National Mission and the Board for International Mission (Bylaw 3.1.4.1 [a]); and

WHEREAS, Both the President and the Board for International Mission recognize the important role played by both the Chief Mission Officer and the executive director of the Office of International Mission at the Synod conventions and floor committee meetings and have recommended that the Bylaws be revised to enable the executive director of the Office of International Mission to serve as advisory representative at Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, The Board for International Mission has previously made use of 2013 Bylaw 3.1.4.1 (c) ("Other exceptions must have the approval of the Board of Directors of the Synod prior to each convention") to request that the executive director of the Office of International Mission be designated as an advisory representative of the Board for International Mission to the 2013 and 2016 Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors of the Synod has responded to the aforementioned requests and approved the granting of exceptions allowing the Board for International Mission to designate the executive director of the Office of International Mission as an advisory representative of the Board for International Mission at the 2013 and 2016 Synod conventions, in accordance with 2013 Bylaw 3.1.4.1 (c); and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of the Synod has indicated that he intends to bring a positive recommendation to the Commission on Handbook concerning the ongoing designation of the executive director of the Office of International Mission as an advisory representative of the Board for International Mission at future Synod conventions, with a view toward a proposed Bylaw revision to be considered at the 2016 Synod convention; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook be requested to prepare bylaw revision language that establishes the executive director of the Office of International Mission as a regular advisory representative of the Board for International Mission at all Synod conventions; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 Synod convention be encouraged to adopt the aforementioned revision of the Bylaws to be prepared and submitted by the Commission on Handbook.

Board for International Mission

11-26

To Make Incumbent Members of the Board for International Mission Eligible for Floor Nominations

WHEREAS, 2013 Bylaw 3.8.3.2 states, "The Board for International Mission shall be comprised of eleven members," ten of which shall be "1. Five laypersons and five individual members of the Synod (one of each from each region of the Synod) elected in the same manner as are regional members of the Board of Directors of the Synod (Bylaws 3.12.1 and 3.12.2.7)"; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Bylaw 3.12.2.7 accordingly defines the procedure by which, for instance, regional vice-presidents of the Synod, regional members of the Board of Directors of the Synod, and regional members of the Board for International Mission are nominated and elected; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Bylaw 3.12.2.7 states, "(c) The names of the five [laypersons or individual members of the Synod being elected to the Board for International Mission] 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 [Board for International Mission member]. (d) No opportunity shall be provided for additional nominations from the floor of the convention”; and

WHEREAS, While the process defined in 2013 Bylaw 3.12.2.7 may result in an election slate that includes incumbent regional vice-president nominees and incumbent regional members of the Board of Directors of the Synod nominees who have garnered a relatively larger total number of nominating votes within their regions, the same might not be anticipated for incumbent members of the Board for International Mission nominees, especially laypersons, whose work on these boards may be less “publicly visible,” who have lower “name recognition,” and who may receive a relatively fewer total number of nominating votes; and

WHEREAS, Relatively fewer nominating votes for any nominee would give proportionally larger weight to each nominating vote, making it possible that an incumbent member of the Board for International Mission with less public visibility or lower name recognition could be more susceptible to not receiving sufficient nominating votes to be included in the election slate for a subsequent term, even though the incumbent member of the Board for International Mission might be otherwise eligible under the Bylaws and readily willing to stand for reelection, possibly continuing in highly valued service as a member of the Board for International Mission; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Bylaw 3.8.3 states, “The Board for International Mission is charged with developing and determining policies in support of mission and ministry in foreign countries for the Office of International Mission (Bylaw 1.2.1 [m]),” and, therefore, the members of the Board for International Mission carry out crucial activities in the development of policy and the oversight of policy implementation for the support, guidance, planning, and execution of core program ministries in the Synod’s witness, mercy, and life together; and

WHEREAS, Owing to the crucial nature of the work of the Board for International Mission, continuity of board membership and the possibility of ongoing service of eligible members of the Board for International Mission is a characteristic that appropriately ought to be placed before the Synod in convention and taken into consideration when electing members to the Board for International Mission; and

WHEREAS, In regard to the selection of candidates to be included in the report (Bylaw 3.12.3.6 [b]) of the Committee for Convention Nominations, the Synod has historically acknowledged the value of continuity of service in elective offices and on elective boards and commissions requiring nonregional nominations, since Bylaw 3.12.3.4 (d) states, “All incumbents eligible for reelection shall be considered to be nominees”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook be requested to prepare bylaw revision language that makes incumbent (and only incumbent) members of the Board for International Mission who are not otherwise ineligible for reelection (e.g., under the term limits specified in 2013 Bylaw 3.2.4.2), if they have not otherwise been included in the election slate formed by the procedure defined in 2013 Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (c), eligible for convention floor nominations to be included in the election slate for the Board for International Mission; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 Synod convention be encouraged to adopt the aforementioned revision of the Bylaws to be prepared and submitted by the Commission on Handbook and accept floor nominations

as described above, prior to the election of the members of the Board for International Mission.

Board for International Mission

11-27

To Revise and Enhance Nomination and Election Process for Regional Board Members

The 2010 LCMS convention adopted changes to the bylaws that allow for the regional election of certain vice-president, Board of Directors, and mission board positions. While these regional elections have been well received, recent experience has shown that there are a number of deficiencies and opportunities for improvement to the nomination and election processes.

Currently, the submission of nominations for regional positions is restricted to congregations within that region. The final slates for these positions are populated by the five nominees who receive the highest number of nominations. In some cases, the slate includes persons who have low, single digit numbers of nominations. The Board of Directors believes expanding the pool of nominators will likely result in more nominees for consideration. Because the slate is currently compiled based solely on the number of nominations received, there is no opportunity for an assessment to determine whether a candidate possesses sufficient qualifications necessary to perform the functions of the position for which they are being nominated. Additionally, the current process does not allow for floor nominations which would provide an opportunity to amend the slate should there be a more qualified candidate in the pool of nominees.

The proposed overture attempts to address each of the issues identified in the preceding paragraph. Additionally, we advocate for the inclusion of the Committee on Convention Nominations in the process of gathering and reviewing the nominees, tasking them to create a slate of the most qualified candidates using previously established processes that are used for the election of other LCMS positions.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That certain bylaws be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.12 Nominations and Elections

Regional Elections

3.12.1 For all elections requiring regional representation, the Board of Directors of the Synod and the Council of Presidents acting jointly shall designate five geographic regions.

- (a) Regions shall be designated 24 months prior to conventions of the Synod and shall take into consideration geographical and number of congregations information in the interest of fair representation.
- (b) For purposes of regional elections, individuals will be considered a part of the geographical region ~~where their congregational membership is held in which their home address is located~~. Canadian congregations will be placed as a whole into the region which the Board of Directors and the Council of Presidents deem appropriate.
- (c) This information shall be shared immediately with all districts of the Synod.

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. ~~(This shall also be the process used for all other regional elections.)~~

- (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).
- (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.
- (e) Voting delegates to the national convention shall be entitled to vote for one of the candidates from each 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.
- (f) Balloting shall continue with the candidate receiving the least number of votes eliminated until one candidate from each region has received a majority of the votes cast.
- (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.

Nominations and Elections of Regional Positions—Board of Directors and Mission Boards

- 3.12.2.8 The convention shall elect the regional positions for the Synod's Board of Directors and Mission Boards according to the following nominations and elections process.
- (a) Approximately 24 months before a regular meeting of the Synod in convention, the Secretary of the Synod shall solicit from those agencies with positions to be filled descriptions of criteria for qualified candidates to serve in those positions.
 - (b) With such criteria in view, the Secretary shall issue the first call for nominations through a publication of the Synod and on the Synod website 18 months before the convention, soliciting names from the 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. Nominations may be received from persons or parties outside the region.
 - (c) All nominees for a particular regional position must reside within the boundaries of the region for which they are nominated.
 - (d) All incumbents eligible for reelection shall be considered to be nominees.
 - (e) The qualifications of each nominee shall be submitted together with the names on forms made available on the Synod's website.
 - (f) All suggested names and information for consideration by the Committee for Convention Nominations shall be submitted to the Secretary of the Synod no later than nine months prior to the convention of the Synod.
 - (g) All nominations received shall be forwarded to the Committee on Convention Nominations who shall select candidates according to the process outlined in Bylaw 3.12.3.6.
 - (h) Amendments to the slate of candidates developed by the Committee on Convention Nominations shall follow the process outlined in Bylaw 3.12.3.7.
 - (i) Voting delegates to the national convention shall elect the members of all elective regional positions following the process outlined in Bylaw 3.12.4.2.

Committee for Convention Nominations

3.12.3.6 The Committee for Convention Nominations shall select candidates for all elective offices, boards, and commissions except President, First Vice-President, and elective vice-president positions requiring regional nominations (Bylaws 3.12.2.7; 3.3.4.1; 3.8.2.2; 3.8.3.2).

Committee on Elections

3.12.4.2 The President shall determine and announce a period of time during the convention for the election of the members of all elective boards and commissions.

- (e) Except in the elections of the First Vice-President, and regional vice-presidents, and regional board members, 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.

3.8.2.2 The Board for National Mission shall be comprised of eleven members:

1. Five laypersons and five individual members of the Synod (one of each from each region of the Synod) elected in the same manner as are regional members of the Board of Directors of the Synod (Bylaws 3.12.1 and ~~3.12.2.7~~ 3.12.2.8)

2. The President of the Synod or his representative

In 2016, the laypersons elected from the Great Plains and East/Southeast regions and the individual members of the Synod elected from the West/Southwest, Central, and Great Lakes regions shall be elected for three-year terms.

3.8.3.2 The Board for International Mission shall be comprised of eleven members:

1. Five laypersons and five individual members of the Synod (one of each from each region of the Synod) elected in the same manner as are regional members of the Board of Directors of the Synod (see Bylaws 3.12.1 and ~~3.12.2.7~~ 3.12.2.8)

2. The President of the Synod or his representative

In 2016, the individual members of the Synod elected from the Great Plains and East/Southeast regions and the laypersons elected from the West/Southwest, Central, and Great Lakes regions shall be elected for three-year terms.

LCMS Board of Directors

11-28

To Establish Board for National Mission Representation at Synod Conventions

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.1.4.1 (a) states, "Each board or commission shall be represented [at Synod conventions] by its chairman or another board or commission member and by its principal staff person"; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.8.2.4 states, "In carrying out its mission responsibilities, the Office of National Mission shall receive its primary focus from the mission and ministry emphases developed triennially by the national Synod in convention and from policies developed and determined by the Board for National Mission"; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.8.2.6 states, "The staff of the Office of National Mission shall assume a coordinative role for ministry areas in response to directives from the Synod in convention or upon the request of two-thirds of the members of the Council of Presidents on behalf of the districts"; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.8.2.5 states, "All staff [of the Office of National Mission] shall be responsible and accountable for their activities to the President of the Synod (Constitution Art. XI B 1–4)

between conventions of the Synod and ultimately to the Synod in convention (Constitution Art. XI A 1–2)”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 1.4.6 states, “Each staff [of the Synod] develops procedures, recommends and reviews programs and ministries, manages programs, and recommends policy and program modifications. Staff implements decisions in accordance with approved policy. (a) Staff is responsible to the Synod at the national or district level in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod at the national or district level, resolutions of the respective convention, and the policies of a district or any other agency to which it is responsible; (b) Staffs ordinarily serve as the liaison between the national and district levels. Staffs at the national and district levels consult with one another in developing program proposals; (c) Each chief executive or executive director shall report on staff activities and recommendations to the national Synod, district, agency, or officer to which that executive is responsible and, as requested, to the president of the district or of the Synod”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.4.3.1 states, “The Chief Mission Officer shall provide staff and other resource(s) to the Board for National Mission and the Board for International Mission” and serves as an advisory representative at convention as the “principal staff person” for the Board for National Mission and the Board for International Mission (Bylaw 3.1.4.1 [a]); and

WHEREAS, Both the President and the Board for National Mission recognize the important role played by both the Chief Mission Officer and the executive director of the Office of National Mission at Synod conventions and floor committee meetings and have recommended that the Bylaws be revised to enable the executive director of the Office of National Mission to serve as advisory representative at Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, The Board for National Mission has previously made use of 2013 Bylaw 3.1.4.1 (c) (“Other exceptions must have the approval of the Board of Directors of the Synod prior to each convention”) to request that the executive director of the Office of National Mission be designated as an advisory representative of the Board for National Mission to the 2013 and 2016 Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors of the Synod has responded to the aforementioned requests and approved the granting of exceptions allowing the Board for National Mission to designate the executive director of the Office of National Mission as an advisory representative of the Board for National Mission at the 2013 and 2016 Synod conventions, in accordance with Bylaw 3.1.4.1 (c); and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of the Synod has indicated that he intends to bring a positive recommendation to the Commission on Handbook concerning the ongoing designation of the executive director of the Office of National Mission as an advisory representative of the Board for National Mission at future Synod conventions, with a view toward a proposed bylaw revision to be considered at the 2016 Synod convention; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook be requested to prepare bylaw revision language that establishes the executive director of the Office of National Mission as a regular advisory representative of the Board for National Mission at all Synod conventions; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 Synod convention be encouraged to adopt the aforementioned revision of the Bylaws to be prepared and submitted by the Commission on Handbook.

Board for National Mission
St. Louis, MO

11-29

To Make Incumbent Members of the Board for National Mission Eligible for Floor Nominations

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.8.2.2 states, “The Board for National Mission shall be comprised of eleven members,” ten of which shall be “1. Five laypersons and five individual members of the Synod (one of each from each region of the Synod) elected in the same manner as are regional members of the Board of Directors of the Synod (Bylaws 3.12.1 and 3.12.2.7)”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.12.2.7 accordingly defines the procedure by which, for instance, regional vice-presidents of the Synod, regional members of the Board of Directors of the Synod, and regional members of the Board for National Mission are nominated and elected; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.12.2.7 states that “(c) The names of the five [laypersons or individual members of the Synod being elected to the Board for National Mission] 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 [Board for National Mission member]. (d) No opportunity shall be provided for additional nominations from the floor of the convention”; and

WHEREAS, While the process defined in Bylaw 3.12.2.7 may result in an election slate that includes incumbent regional vice-president nominees and incumbent regional members of the Board of Directors of the Synod, nominees who have garnered a relatively larger total number of nominating votes within their regions, the same might not be anticipated for incumbent members of the Board for National Mission nominees, especially laypersons, whose work on these boards may be less “publicly visible,” who have lower “name recognition,” and who may receive a relatively fewer total number of nominating votes; and

WHEREAS, Relatively fewer nominating votes for any nominee would give proportionally larger weight to each nominating vote, making it possible that an incumbent member of the Board for National Mission with less public visibility or lower name recognition could be more susceptible to not receiving sufficient nominating votes to be included in the election slate for a subsequent term, even though the incumbent member of the Board for National Mission might be otherwise eligible under the Bylaws and readily willing to stand for re-election, possibly continuing in highly-valued service as a member of the Board for National Mission; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.8.2 states, “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 1.2.1 [m]),” and that, therefore, the members of the Board for National Mission carry out crucial activities in the development of policy and the oversight of policy implementation for the support, guidance, planning, and execution of core program ministries in the Synod’s witness, mercy, and life together; and

WHEREAS, Owing to the crucial nature of the work of the Board for National Mission, continuity of board membership and the possibility of ongoing service of eligible members of the Board for National Mission is a characteristic that appropriately ought to be placed before the Synod in convention and taken into consideration when electing members to the Board for National Mission; and

WHEREAS, In regard to the selection of candidates to be included in the report (Bylaw 3.12.3.6 [b]) of the Committee for Convention Nominations, the Synod has historically acknowledged the value of continuity of service in elective offices and on elective boards

and commissions requiring non-regional nominations, since Bylaw 3.12.3.4 (d) states that “All incumbents eligible for re-election shall be considered to be nominees”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook be requested to prepare bylaw revision language that makes incumbent (and only incumbent) members of the Board for National Mission who are not otherwise ineligible for re-election (e.g. under the term limits specified in Bylaw 3.2.4.2), if they have not otherwise been included in the election slate formed by the procedure defined in 2013 Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (c), eligible for convention floor nominations to be included in the election slate for the Board for National Mission; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 Synod convention be encouraged to adopt the aforementioned revision of the Bylaws, to be prepared and submitted by the Commission on Handbook, and accept floor nominations as described above, prior to the election of the members of the Board for National Mission.

Board for National Mission
St. Louis, MO

11-30

To Declare CCM Opinion 13-2694, re Doctrinal Resolutions, Null and Void

WHEREAS, Membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is based on the confessional standard set forth in Article II of the Synod’s Constitution; and

WHEREAS, Membership in the Synod is held by congregations and ministers of religion who confess and accept the confessional basis of Article II; and

WHEREAS, Congregations and individuals have joined the Synod with the assurance that Article II alone is indeed the Synod’s confessional standard (see Art. VI 1); and

WHEREAS, All matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God (Art. VIII C); and

WHEREAS, Doctrinal resolutions come into being in the same manner as any other resolutions of a convention of the Synod and are to be honored and upheld until such time as the Synod amends or repeals them (Bylaw 1.6.2 [a]); and

WHEREAS, The Synod is not infallible and has established a formal dissent process for doctrinal statements when challenges arise (Bylaw section 1.8); and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 13-2694 in effect amends Article II by requiring its members to abide by, act, and teach in accord with majority-approved doctrinal resolutions and statements which are not mentioned in Article II; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Northwest District in convention memorialize the 2016 convention of the Synod to declare CCM Opinion 13-2694 unconstitutional in that it, in effect, amends Article II and contravenes Articles VI, VII, and VIII of the Synod’s Constitution; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod declare CCM 13-2694 to be null and void; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod reaffirm its adherence to Article II of its Constitution as its sole confessional standard.

Northwest District

11-31

To Complete Study of Constitution Article VII

WHEREAS, Membership in the Synod is clearly defined in Article V of the Synod’s Constitution as being “held and may be acquired by congregations, ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned”; and

WHEREAS, The conditions of membership in the Synod are also clearly defined in Article VI, which apply equally to both corporate members (congregations) and individual members (professional church workers); and

WHEREAS, The relation of the Synod to its members in Article VII is not explicit as to how the “advisory” nature of Synod relates to individual members (both ministers of religion—ordained and ministers of religion—commissioned) compared to corporate members (congregations); and

WHEREAS, This lack of clarity is often demonstrated by a *de facto* diversity of opinions on the part of many in the Synod, specifically whether the Synod is “advisory” in relation to individual members of the Synod in the same manner as it is to corporate members of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, 2010 Res. 8-32B “To Study Article VII of Synod’s Constitution” similarly addressed the clarity of Article VII, assigning the implementation of a synod-wide study to the President of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, This task has not been completed; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Northwest District in convention memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to prioritize the consideration of this issue of the relation of the Synod to all members of the Synod (both corporate and individual) with renewed attention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod convention direct the Commission on Handbook to obtain a definitive clarification to this question; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook report this clarification, with any recommendations for action, to the 2019 convention of Synod.

Northwest District; Oregon Pastors Conference, Northwest District

11-32

To Overrule CCM Opinion 13-2694

WHEREAS, Membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is based on the confessional standard set forth in Art. II of the Synod’s Constitution; and

WHEREAS, Membership in the Synod is held by congregations and ministers of religion who confess and accept the confessional basis of Art. II; and

WHEREAS, Congregations and individuals have joined the Synod with the assurance that Art. II alone is indeed the Synod’s confessional standard (Constitution, Art. VI 1); and

WHEREAS, In relation to its members, the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government that exercises legislative or coercive powers, and is but an advisory body (Constitution, Art. VII); and

WHEREAS, All matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God, not by majority votes at Synod conventions (Constitution, Art. VIII C); and

WHEREAS, All matters of doctrine and of conscience are thus subject only to the Word of God and to the power of evangelical, fraternal persuasion; and

WHEREAS, Resolutions and statements that are adopted by majority vote at Synod conventions merely indicate the theological opinion of the majority at a Synod convention at a given time; and

WHEREAS, Unanimity and agreement in doctrine would not be achieved or maintained by the imposition of resolutions and statements on the members of the Synod but only through submission to the clear teaching of Scripture and the clear witness to that teaching by the Confessions; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has historically understood opposition to resolutions and statements by its members, especially when such resolutions and statements have been adopted by rather narrow majorities in the somewhat politicized setting of a Synod convention, to be an indication that the doctrinal issues in question were not yet clarified or settled (i.e., a significant minority of members had not been evangelically persuaded); and

WHEREAS, Synod resolutions and statements that are regarded as explanations of the Scriptures and the Confessions become in effect additional confessions when such documents are given binding character; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 13-2694 in effect amends Art. II by requiring the Synod's members to abide by, act, and teach in accord with majority-approved doctrinal resolutions and statements that are not mentioned in Art. II; and

WHEREAS, The Synod, being an advisory body, has no right to impose on its members confessional standards other than those specifically mentioned in Art. II; and

WHEREAS, The Synod, being an advisory body, has no right to impose on its members potentially transitory doctrinal resolutions and statements; and

WHEREAS, CCM Opinion 13-2694 in effect denies the possibility for dissent within the Synod since the CCM has ruled that any persistent public disagreement with a convention resolution or statement is a violation of the confessional basis of the Synod (thus making majority votes on doctrinal resolutions and statements at Synod conventions equal in authority to the Scriptures and Confessions themselves); therefore be it

Resolved, That we, Circuit 9, request the Pacific Southwest District to memorialize the 2016 Synod convention to declare CCM Opinion 13-2694 unconstitutional in that it amends Art. II and contravenes Art. VI, VII, and VIII of the Synod's Constitution; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod declare CCM Opinion 13-2694 to be null and void; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod reaffirm its adherence to Art. II as its sole confessional standard; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage districts to organize conferences of laity (women, men, and youth) and ministers of religion to address and openly discuss the Scriptures and the Confessions and inquire into their teaching with regard to those theological matters and problems that are currently contributing to theological disunity within the Synod (e.g., admittance to the Lord's Supper, the ordination of women, the doctrine of creation); and be it further

Resolved, That these regional conferences will draw upon the expertise and insights of laity (women, men, and youth) and ministers of religion; and be it finally

Resolved, That these regional conferences would be encouraged to share publicly with the Synod particular points of theological agreement and disagreement that emerge from their study of the Scriptures and the Confessions and that surface as a result of evangelical discussion and persuasion.

Pacific Southwest District

11-33

To Affirm Article II as the Only Required Confession

WHEREAS, Article II of the LCMS Constitution requires only subscription to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions found in the Book of Concord as conditions of membership; and

WHEREAS, Certain recent actions of the Synod, especially the expulsion of The Rev. Matthew Becker, have introduced other confessional standards of membership; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention reject as unconstitutional attempts to require acceptance of resolutions, rulings, opinions, or other interpretations issued by the Synod, in addition to our historic confessional basis for membership.

Redeemer, Mercer Island, WA; Zion, Portland, OR

11-34

To Affirm the Advisory Nature of Synod

WHEREAS, Article VII of the LCMS Constitution states clearly that "in relation to its members [congregations and professional church workers] the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation's right of self-government it is but an advisory body"; and

WHEREAS, Article VII additionally states, "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"; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention affirm the advisory nature of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS clearly affirm that it is member congregations of the Synod and professional church workers of the Synod who determine whether any resolution of the Synod, including opinions, rulings, policies, and other superficially authoritative declarations, be in accordance with the Word of God and/or are expedient so far as the condition of a congregation is concerned.

Redeemer
Mercer Island, WA

11-35

To Affirm Advisory Nature of Synod

WHEREAS, The founders of the LCMS were adamant that the larger church body be advisory in nature relative to its members, and not an ecclesiastical authority to govern congregations; and

WHEREAS, Article VII of the LCMS Constitution clearly states this principle: "[I]n its relation to its members [professional church workers and congregations] the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation's right of self-government it is but an advisory body"; and

WHEREAS, Article VII further states: "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"; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention affirm the advisory nature of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS clearly affirm that it is the member congregations and their member professional church workers who determine whether any resolution of Synod—including opinions, rulings, policies, and the like—is in accordance with the Word of God and/or expedient as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned.

Zion
Portland, OR

11-36

To Have Equal Lay and Ordained Representation on Convention Floor Committees

WHEREAS, Scripture clearly speaks of all Christians as members of the royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9); and

WHEREAS, The founders of the LCMS, as the foundation of its church polity, recognized the need for clergy and laity to share equally in the decision-making process; and

WHEREAS, Current practices used in appointing floor committees for Synod conventions have the potential to disenfranchise our lay members of the royal priesthood; therefore be it

Resolved, That there be equal numbers of voting lay and ordained members on all floor committees at future Synod conventions.

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids, MI; Board of Directors, Southeastern District; Michigan District; St. Luke, Haslett, MI; First, Hanford, CA; Board of Directors, Florida-Georgia District; Redeemer, Fresno, CA

11-37

To Discuss Enabling Advisory Delegates to Become Voting Delegates at Future Conventions

WHEREAS, The LCMS has allowed commissioned ministers to be advisory delegates and have a voice at district and Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, Each advisory delegate represents 60 rostered workers; and

WHEREAS, Each district financially supports the attendance of these advisory delegates at Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, Advisory delegates often attend district and Synod conventions and are underutilized; and

WHEREAS, Called commissioned ministers now serve as directors of parish music, directors of Christian outreach, directors of family life ministry, directors of Christian education, early childhood education directors, worship arts coordinators, principals, and teachers, and are currently on the Synod roster and individual members of the Synod serving in congregations of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Called commissioned ministers have a critical ministry impact in the lives of families as an outreach arm of congregations; and

WHEREAS, The financial obligation of districts would be lessened by sending voting commissioned delegates at a ratio higher than the current 60-to-1 ratio; therefore be it

Resolved, That this ratio be increased to one voting commissioned minister for every 120 commissioned ministers on the Synod roster; and be it further

Resolved, That this increased ratio maintain a balance between voting pastoral delegates and lay delegates while giving commissioned ministers voting representation; and be it further

Resolved, That this discussion begin at the 2016 Synod convention, with a decision to be reached by the 2019 Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS Constitution and Bylaws be edited to reflect changes that will allow commissioned ministers to vote at future district and Synod conventions; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod seek ways to engage all advisory delegates for future conventions.

Michigan District

11-38

To Make Uniform the Process for Restructuring Circuits for Synod Convention Delegate Representation

WHEREAS, LCMS governing documents have no uniform process for restructuring circuits for the purpose of determining voting delegates to Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, Uniformity of representation is a desirable quality to provide equitable representation among the districts; and

WHEREAS, A periodic restructuring process allows stability within the various circuits; and

WHEREAS, A uniform process creates balanced representation as between groups of congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod Bylaw 3.1.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.1.2 Voting delegates shall consist of one pastor and one layman from each electoral circuit.

(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 to 10,000.

(b) The district board of directors shall use the requirements as set forth above with respect to the annual survey of congregations for the year 2016 as reported in the LCMS records for that year to realign its congregations into electoral circuits in conformity with these requirements.

(c) The realignment of the district's electoral circuits shall be based on the geographical location of the churches and shall be reported to the Synod before the next Synod convention.

(d) This realignment shall remain in effect for a period of nine years following its adoption (unless the boundaries of the district are changed), regardless of whether the circuit remains in conformity with the requirements established in Bylaw 3.1.2 (a).

(b) ~~(e)~~ Exceptions to these requirements may be made only by the President of the Synod upon request of a district board of directors.

Board of Directors
Michigan District

11-39

To Make Uniform the Process for Restructuring Circuits for Synod Convention Delegate Determination

WHEREAS, The governing documents of the LCMS have no uniform process for restructuring circuits for the purpose of determining voting delegates to Synod conventions; and

WHEREAS, Uniformity of representation is a desirable quality to provide equitable representation among the districts; and

WHEREAS, A periodic restructuring process allows stability within the various circuits; and

WHEREAS, A uniform process creates balanced representation as between groups of congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, that Synod Bylaw 3.1.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.1.2 Voting delegates shall consist of one pastor and one layman from each electoral circuit.

- (a) An electoral circuit ~~shall consist either of one or two adjacent visitation circuits, as shall be determined by the district board of directors based on the geographical proximity of congregations and~~ on the basis of one of the following requirements:

(1) A pair of delegates shall represent 10 or more congregations without regard to the number of confirmed members.

(2) A each pair of delegates shall represent from a minimum of 7seven to 20 member congregations with not fewer than; involving an aggregate confirmed membership ranging from 1,500 confirmed members. to 10,000.

(3) A pair of delegates shall represent four or more congregations with not fewer than 5,000 confirmed members.

- (b) Exceptions to these requirements may be made only by the President of the Synod upon request of a district board of directors.

Board of Directors
Michigan District

11-40

To Provide Alternative Method for Certifying Congregational Voters in Synod President Elections

WHEREAS, The LCMS *Handbook* Bylaw 3.12.2.3 calls for “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” (*emphasis added*); and

WHEREAS, This bylaw has no alternative to this designated methodology which recognizes that there may exist legitimate reasons why the two voting delegates from each congregation or their alternates were not at the previous convention; and

WHEREAS, In the spirit of inclusion of all congregations in the election of the Synod President, it would seem that an alternative method of certifying voting delegates for the election of the Synod could be developed; therefore be it

Resolved, The Minnesota North District memorialize the 2016 Synod convention to consider an alternative method of certifying the delegates for the election of the Synod President that would allow the district president to certify delegates from those congregations with an absent delegate at the previous district convention by application of the affected congregation to the district president asking for designation for a specific person from the affected congregation to be certified as voting delegate for the election of the Synod President; and be it further

Resolved, That only those congregations that had paid their district convention delegate registration fees may make this application to the district president.

Minnesota North District

11-41

To Affirm Past Policy re Display of Literature at Synod Conventions

WHEREAS, At past Synod conventions in 2010, 2007, etc., official Synod materials were always at tables or areas separate from literature from other various unofficial organizations; and

WHEREAS, At the 2013 Synod convention, literature from other various unofficial organizations was compiled at the same table with the official Synod materials and handouts; and

WHEREAS, This literature from various unofficial organizations with differing points of views featured articles showing certain members of the Synod’s leadership in a very negative manner; and

WHEREAS, The Eighth Commandment states, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor”; and

WHEREAS, The meaning of the Eighth Commandment states: “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”; and

WHEREAS, Ephesians 4:25 states, “Each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body”; therefore be it

Resolved, That we strive always to speak well of all of our fellow Synod members; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm the past policy that literature from various unofficial organizations be compiled on separate tables from the official Synod materials.

Salem
Buffalo, NY

11-42

To Permit Electronic Means for Official Dissemination of Convention Workbooks

Whereas, The Lord provides faithfully for His Church through First Article gifts; and

WHEREAS, Technological advancements provide a means to disseminate information without the cost of printing and postage; and

Whereas, The Synod’s Bylaws are binding upon its districts; and

WHEREAS, The 2013 LCMS Res. 7-05 allowed for electronic meetings for voting by circuits, districts, and Synod agencies; and

WHEREAS, Savings realized from electronic dissemination of convention workbooks allow those funds to be used in service to the Gospel; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Directors of the Missouri District memorialize the Synod in convention to amend Synod Bylaw 3.1.8 (b) as follows:

PROPOSED WORDING

3.1.8 A *Convention Workbook* containing a convention manual, reports and overtures, the names and mailing addresses of all voting delegates, and other information shall be published under the editorship of the Secretary subject to approval of the President.

...

- (b) The content of the *Convention Workbook* shall be posted on the Synod’s Website not later than 12 weeks prior to the opening date of the convention, with printed copies mailed or electronic copies disseminated to each delegate and alternate, all officers of the Synod, and members of boards, commissions, and councils.

Board of Directors
Missouri District

11-43

To Adopt Four-Year Convention and Terms-of-Office Cycle

Resolved, That the English District memorialize the 2016 convention to amend the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws to adopt a four-year cycle of conventions and terms of four years for its officers.

English District
Farmington, MI

11-44

To Amend Constitution to Grant Lay Vote to Every Congregation

Preamble

When Jesus directs those attempting to admonish an erring brother, He states that the final attempt of such admonition is to take the matter before the church (Matt. 18:17). To that assembly Jesus predicates the authority to exercise the Office of the Keys saying, "And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:17b–18). This God-given authority is not limited by the size of a congregation; for Jesus goes on to add a clear promise to be with even the smallest assembly or congregation. "Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them" (Matt. 18:19–20).

The Lutheran church in general and the LCMS in particular have always held the autonomy of the congregation in high esteem. The Confessions of the Lutheran church testify to the authority given by Christ to the church as recorded in the Scriptures. Particularly, the above mentioned verses of Matthew 18 are cited in the *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* defending the church's right of calling ministers (Tr. 24, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*). Later it is made clear that this authority comes down to each congregation: "Therefore when the regular bishops become unwilling to administer ordination, the churches retain their own right [to ordain ministers]. Where the Church is, there is the authority to administer the Gospel" (Tr. 66–67).

When the question of church and ministry was raised in the early days of our Synod's history, Pastor C. F. W. Walther expressed the urgency of clarifying the scriptural position on the matter, in part because of its implications for church polity (cf. Walther's preface to the first edition of *Church and Ministry*, especially pages xvii–xix in the 2012 edition edited by Matthew C. Harrison and published by CPH). Because of the divine institution of the church and the Office of the Holy Ministry, the LCMS has consistently upheld the temporal right of a congregation to have a say in the business of the Synod, and this is not limited to pastoral representation, but has also included the laity. In recent times, the voice of the congregation has been heard through the voting of two delegates appointed by a congregation to represent her at district conventions as well as circuit forums where delegates to Synod conventions are elected.

However, even though we acknowledge the God-given authority of each congregation, our Synod has not allowed certain congregations to be represented equally in the affairs of our Synod. As we walk together we have muted the voices of many congregations by

calling a "dual or multiple-congregation arrangement served by the same pastor" a "parish" and limiting each parish in such a context to one pastoral and one lay vote (CCM Opinion 03-2327, "Voting Rights of Congregations"). In one extreme case, four congregations served jointly by two pastors have been allowed a total of two votes at district meetings (CCM Opinion 09-2545, "Voting Rights of Congregations").

By disenfranchising certain congregations who hold membership in the Synod, we have acted inconsistently on a number of levels.

- Though we confess no divinely appointed form of church polity, denying some congregations the right to the same representation that other congregations have in matters of the Synod is at best at a disconnect with our theological understanding of a congregation's embodiment of the catholicity of the Church.
- In some matters of the Synod that are dealt with on a congregational level, every congregation is allowed to speak for herself. However, in other matters, multiple congregations served jointly by one or more pastors are required to come together and speak with one voice, thereby reducing the value of each congregation's voice.
- In regard to voting at district conventions, the term *parish* has come to mean a "dual or multiple-congregation arrangement served by the same pastor," but the majority of the times *parish* is used in the *Handbook* it is used synonymously with the term *congregation*, for example, in the following titles: "director of parish music" and "parish assistant." Such servants of the church are certainly not limited to settings where two or more congregations have come together to call a pastor.
- Furthermore, if the term *parish* is used consistently, we must also re-evaluate whom we elected to the CTCR, seeing as Bylaw 3.9.5.1 requires "two ordained ministers who are *parish pastors*" (emphasis added).

	Independent Voice	Shared Voice
Representation at District conventions		X
Representation at Circuit Forums	X	
Election of circuit delegates to Synod Convention	X	
Vote on Amendments to Synod Constitution	X	
Nominate Synod Officers including Synod President	X	
Voting for Synod President		X
Establishing necessary number of congregations for electoral circuits	X	

The problems created by such a situation are only intensified when the congregations making up a multiple-congregation setting lie in different circuits or even districts.

Some would claim that allowing each congregation in a multi-point parish a vote at district conventions would throw off the balance between laity and clergy. Historically, the Synod has allowed for an equal number of pastoral and lay voting delegates; however, no great effort has been made to ensure that an equal number of lay and pastoral delegates actually attend the convention of Synod. The constituting convention of Synod in 1847 consisted of 16 voting delegates. Of those only 4 were lay delegates. A year later there were 6 voting lay delegates and 25 voting pastoral delegates. That was a significant imbalance, but there is no evidence that anyone was bothered by it, since the opportunity was given for significant lay participation along with the clergy.

If there are 509 multipoint parishes including 1,051 congregations as of 2013, granting a voting representation could create an additional 542 lay votes at district conventions. Given that there are

approximately 6,100 congregations in the Synod, such a change would permit 6,100 voting lay delegates to 5,558 pastoral delegates (see lcms.org/aboutus).

Granted, these numbers could change significantly according to changing demographics, but currently, if every congregation sent a lay delegate, on average across the various districts lay delegates would outnumber clergy by a ratio of less than 1.1 to 1. And it is likely that a sizable minority of congregations who are able to send lay delegates do not, so that even if congregations in multipoint parishes were each allowed a voting lay delegate, pastoral delegates may still outnumber the lay delegates in general. In any case, we are a significant way from the imbalance of the early days of our Synod.

Regarding the objection that granting a voting lay delegate to every congregation would change the historic precedent, it should be noted that other aspects of our structure have changed significantly since 1847. For example, we now have the possibility for (and numerous examples of) dual parishes consisting of congregations in different districts. In those cases, the congregations in a district other than the district in which their pastors are members receive no representation with a voice at their district conventions.

Proposed Action

WHEREAS, The Synod Constitution Art. V A deals with voting members of the Synod and states: “All organized congregations that have joined the Synod hold voting membership. At the meetings of the districts of the Synod every congregation or parish is entitled to two votes, one of which is to be cast by the pastor and the other by the lay delegate”; and

WHEREAS, The term *parish* is used for the first time in the Constitution and only in this place has it been interpreted to mean “multiple congregations served by the same pastor(s)”; and

WHEREAS, “Multiple congregations” are only allowed to send a single lay delegate to district conventions, which does not respect the equal dignity, gifts, and authority of all member congregations. Rather, it creates degrees of voting membership in the Synod because every congregation is allowed a vote in some places but not in others (see chart in Preamble); and

WHEREAS, The basic meaning of *parish* is more geographical than the basic meaning of *congregation* (congregation membership is not limited by geography, and a parish would, strictly speaking, include many people [even members of other denominations, as well as unbelievers] who are not members of an LCMS congregation); and

WHEREAS, The presence of a pastor is not what determines the presence of a congregation. According to C. F. W. Walther’s *Church and Ministry* (tr. J. T. Mueller) concerning the church, Article 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 authority that Christ has given to his whole church, on account of the true visible church hidden in them, *even if there were only two or three [believers]*” (emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, The polity of the LCMS is based on congregations and not on parishes; and

WHEREAS, The emphasis of our polity on the representation of congregations is intrinsically connected to the scriptural and confessional understanding of a congregation’s bearing all the characteristics of the church; and

WHEREAS, The restructuring of the LCMS passed by the delegates at the 2010 convention included the provision that congregations of the Synod would directly vote for the Synod President (Congregations Walking Together in Mission as They Elect President and First

Vice-President, Res. 8-17 “To Elect the Synod President,” 2010 *Proceedings*, p. 167); and

WHEREAS, Requiring that a congregation’s two votes for Synod President be cast by those individuals who represented the congregation at the previous district convention disenfranchises the congregations in so-called multiple-congregation settings who are forced to share representation at district conventions; and

WHEREAS, The idea of congregations electing the Synod President enhances the representative nature of this election; and

WHEREAS, 2013 convention Res. 3-07A, “To Further Promote Mission Awareness, Support, Collaboration, and Coordination for Rural and Small Town, Urban and Inner City, and Suburban Ministry” was adopted by an overwhelming majority (981 to 15), the final resolve of which stated: “That the LCMS in convention continue to respect the equal dignity, gifts, and authority of all member congregations, regardless of demographics or size,” (*Proceedings*, p. 119); and

WHEREAS, The use of the term *parish* has led to confusion and the denial of voting rights to certain congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 48th district convention of the Oklahoma District memorialize The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at its 2016 convention to

- 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 (Bylaw 3.1.2.1 [c] allows such representation at circuit forums and regional caucuses);
- retain a single vote for a pastor who represents more than one congregation;
- and amend Art. V A of the Synod Constitution as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

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. At the meetings of the Synod a number of congregations shall form a group which shall be represented by two voting delegates, one a pastor and one a lay delegate.

Oklahoma District

11-45

To Allow All Congregations in a Multi-Congregation Parish a Voting Delegate at District Conventions

WHEREAS, Each congregation is a member of the district; and

WHEREAS, Multiple-congregation parishes have only one lay vote at district conventions; and

WHEREAS, Sister congregations are then deprived of representation; therefore be it

Resolved, That each congregation be afforded the right to have representation at district conventions; and be it further

Resolved, That each congregation in a multiple-congregation parish may send a voting delegate to the district convention.

Arlington Circuit, Minnesota South District; Zion, Green
Isle Township, MN; St. Paul’s, Green Isle Township, MN

11-46

To Move to Four-Year Convention Cycle

WHEREAS, Both decreases in the size of many LCMS congregations and the uncertain economic climate of our times has placed an increased financial burden on many of those who are assessed a portion of the cost of an LCMS convention; and

WHEREAS, We are all charged to be good stewards of our time and treasure; and

WHEREAS, The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance, in its final report to the 2010 LCMS convention, recommended adopting a four-year convention cycle (year one, circuits may hold theological convocations; year two, districts shall hold theological convocations; year three, district conventions shall be held; year four, national Synod convention shall be held); and

WHEREAS, The urgency of matters coming before a district or Synod convention does not demand a three-year cycle, and large economic savings are made possible by moving to a four-year cycle; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod transition to meeting in convention once every four years; and be it further

Resolved, That the four-year convention cycle be scheduled to begin in 2018.

Board of Directors, Southeastern District; Florida-Georgia District

11-47

To Hold National and District Conventions Every Four Years

WHEREAS, We live in a hurried culture and there is a need for deeper study, conversation, and reflection on important matters on a local level that we rarely have time for; and

WHEREAS, Moving to a four-year convention cycle would provide the opportunity for theological and missional grassroots convocations between conventions by congregations, circuits, and/or districts to better engage congregations and church leaders on a local level, providing more time for theological reflection and study; and

WHEREAS, The overall cost to host a district or national convention have continued to increase over the years, which are largely borne by individual congregations, many of which are struggling financially, and impact district and national budgets; and

WHEREAS, Moving to a four-year convention cycle would provide more time to implement convention actions; and

WHEREAS, Moving to a four-year convention cycle may provide opportunity for substantial financial relief to congregation, district, and national budgets; therefore be it

Resolved, That a four-year convention cycle be adopted for the national and district level; and be it further

Resolved, That the four-year schedule would be as follows: year one—circuits may hold convocations and/or local forums; year two—districts may hold or encourage regional theological and missional convocations; year three—district conventions; and year four—the national convention.

Board of Directors
Northwest District

11-48

To Grant Voting Privilege to Assistant Pastors

WHEREAS, All ordained ministers equally hold the Office of the Public Ministry (John 20:21; Treatise on the Primacy and Power of the Pope 9); and

WHEREAS, Nomenclature regarding the Office of the Public Ministry (titles, responsibilities, etc.) is at the discretion of the local congregation; and

WHEREAS, Assistant pastors who have been called and ordained in the Office of the Holy Ministry are, according to the LCMS Constitution Art. V B, ineligible to vote at district meetings but are designated as “advisory members”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 Synod convention strike “assistant pastors” from the list of Advisory Members of the Synod in Article V B of the Synod’s Constitution.

Michigan District

11-49

To Amend Bylaws to Affirm that Conscience Is Bound by the Word of God

WHEREAS, Bylaws 1.10.5 (a) and 2.14.3 (a) read in part: “The district president must follow any opinion received from either the CCM or the CTCR”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaws 2.14.7.9 (c) (3), 2.15.7.9 (c) (3), and 2.17.7.9 (c) (3) read: “CCM and CTCR opinions must be followed if the matter is appealed”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.15.3 (a) reads in part: “The President of the Synod must follow any opinion received from either the CCM or the CTCR”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.16.3 (a) reads in part: “The Council of Presidents by 51 percent of the votes of the district presidents may ask an opinion of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) and/or the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) and must follow any opinion received from either”; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.16.8 (b) reads: “The President of the Synod and/or the district presidents may also request that an opinion of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) or Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) be obtained. ... Any opinion received from either the CCM or the CTCR shall be followed”; and

WHEREAS, At the 2006 Wyoming District convention, Res. 1-06-2006 was passed, which read in part: “This requirement applies to district presidents, dispute resolutions panels, appeals panels, review panels and all hearing panels, that is, all who are involved in matters of ecclesiastical supervision and dispute resolution. In the case of CTCR rulings, this requirement binds consciences to theological conclusions of one church council (commission), though these theological conclusions have neither been received, studied, nor confessed by the Synod as a whole, and therefore cannot bind its members as does a freely confessed creed or symbol. Such was the confession of Martin Luther at Worms. In the case of the CCM, any ruling that may infringe upon the doctrine and practice of Scriptures or the Confessions, such as requiring an Appeal Panel to render a judgment based only on Constitution and Bylaws and not on the Scriptures and the Confessions, also bind consciences contrary to God’s Word”; and

WHEREAS, The Wyoming District expects all her member congregations, pastors, and officers to act in accordance with God’s Word in all matters; and

WHEREAS, The above-named Bylaws could place our district president or a member of the district in the position of having to choose between God's Word and the laws of man; and

WHEREAS, According to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, the conscience of a Christian should always be bound by the Word of God before all things; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to amend the above-named Bylaws so as to be in accordance with the Word of God; and be it further

Resolved, That, should a conflict arise between those Bylaws and the Word of God, the Wyoming District will expect and encourage its officers and all agents of the church to act in obedience to the Word of God, regardless of the consequences vis-à-vis Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Wyoming District secretary inform the President of the Synod and the CTCR of this action, in accordance with Bylaws 3.3.1.1.1 and 1.8.2.

Wyoming District

11-50

COMMISSION ON HANDBOOK 2016 LCMS Convention OMNIBUS OVERTURE #3 (Conventions)

The Commission on Handbook recognizes that its proposed overtures to the 2016 convention can be grouped together according to same-subject matter to facilitate the work of the floor committee. This "omnibus" overture groups the commission's bylaw change proposals regarding conventions into a single overture for the floor committee's convenience.

A. To Designate Chief Administrative Officer as Convention Manager

Rationale

Current Bylaw 3.1.9 (a) speaks of the "Director of General Services" as "convention manager," although the position of Director of General Services no longer exists. The convention position of Director of General Services and its related responsibilities have already been under the day-to-day supervision of the Chief Administrative Officer in preparation for the 2016 convention. The Commission on Handbook proposes the following change to Bylaw 3.1.9 (a) for consideration by the 2016 LCMS convention.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.1.9 (a) be amended to identify the Synod's Director of General Services as the convention manager, as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Convention Order

3.1.9 The President shall be responsible for the overall organization and operations of the conventions of the Synod.

- (a) ~~As the Director of General Services, within the assigned general meeting and conference planning function, The Chief Administrative Officer~~ The Chief Administrative Officer or the Chief Administrative Officer's designee shall serve as the convention manager. ~~He~~ shall be responsible to the President for making arrangements for and directing the externals of the convention and other major assemblies of the synod and may assist with planning and arranging for district conventions.

B. To Clarify District Responsibilities re Convention Publications Distribution

Rationale

Districts are required by Synod Bylaw 4.2.1 (a) to be "governed by the bylaws adopted by the Synod for its conventions, insofar as these may be applicable." Synod Bylaws 3.1.8 (b), 3.1.10.1, and 3.1.10.1 (a) require printed copies of convention workbooks and proceedings to be mailed to bylaw-assigned recipients.

Districts have indicated that the requirement to mail convention workbooks and proceedings impose obligations on districts that often are needlessly expensive, wasteful, and unneeded. Electronic means of communication are now widely available and used by the Synod in multiple other contexts.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention adopt the following additional paragraph to Bylaw 4.2.1:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

4.2 District Conventions

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.

...

- (g) Districts may, at their own discretion, provide their convention workbooks and proceedings to each district congregation, delegate and alternate, officer, and board, commission, and council member by a means of electronic communication, provided that any designated recipient shall be provided a printed copy of the workbook and proceedings upon request.

Commission on Handbook

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COMMISSION ON HANDBOOK 2016 LCMS Convention OMNIBUS OVERTURE #4 (District Administration)

The Commission on Handbook recognizes that its proposed overtures to the 2016 convention can be grouped together according to same-subject matter to facilitate the work of the floor committee. This "omnibus" overture groups the commission's bylaw change proposals regarding **district administration** into a single overture for the floor committee's convenience.

A. To Strengthen Bylaw Requirements for Submission of Statistical Information

Rationale

With the active cooperation of the Council of Presidents, progress has been made by the Office of the Secretary and the Department of Rosters, Statistics, and Research toward obtaining 100 percent

response in congregations' submission of annual statistical information. While this information has always been valuable, increased abilities to use such information for the general good of the Synod and its agencies has increased interest in a unanimous response.

The Commission on Handbook has approved the following bylaw changes proposed by the Secretary of the Synod for submission to the 2016 LCMS convention.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 1.3.4–1.3.4.1; 3.3.3.2; 4.4.7–4.4.8; and 5.2.3 be amended to strengthen requirements for congregations' submission of annual statistical information, as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

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. ~~Members of the Synod, compelled by love for each other, accept the responsibility to support financially the work of the Synod and provide annual statistical information to enable the Synod to plan current and future ministry efforts based upon an accurate picture of the results of current ministries within its churches, communities, and world.~~

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. ~~Thus, 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.~~

1.3.4.2 Members of the Synod, compelled by love for one another, accept the responsibility to support financially the work of the Synod.

1.3.4.3 Congregations of the Synod, to enable the Synod to plan current and future ministry efforts and to lend accuracy and integrity to the Synod's delegate representation and voting processes, agree to provide annual membership and statistical information to the Synod.

3.3.3.2 The Secretary shall perform such other work as pertains to his office or such other work as the Synod in convention, the President, or the Board of Directors of the Synod may assign to him.

- (a) He shall serve as a voting member and secretary of the Commission on Constitutional Matters.
- (b) He shall administer the Synod's dispute resolution process.
- (c) He shall serve as a voting member of the Board of Governors of Concordia Historical Institute.
- (d) He shall supervise the maintenance of the official roster of member congregations and ordained and commissioned ministers on the basis of information supplied by the district presidents.
- (e) He shall supervise the process for obtaining annual statistical information from all member congregations of the Synod.
- (f) He shall serve as editor of *The Lutheran Annual*.
- (fg) He shall keep a file of all governing instruments of all agencies of the Synod.

4.4.7 The district president shall be responsible for maintaining the official rosters of his district.

- (a) He shall add the names of those ordained or commissioned ministers initially placed in the district and those accepting a call to or otherwise transferring to the district.
- (b) He shall remove the names of those who have died or have resigned their membership or have had their membership in the Synod duly terminated.
- (c) An ordained or commissioned minister accepting a call to a congregation in a sister district or to an institution which relates to such district shall immediately report such decision to his district president and ask for a transfer of membership. The district president shall forward such transfer to the president of the sister district.
- (d) Upon receipt of the transfer and of a request for installation from the minister of religion, the district president of the sister district shall install or authorize installation of such minister.
- (e) He shall regularly forward roster reports to the Secretary of the Synod for publication in *The Lutheran Annual*.

4.4.8 The district president shall ~~revise annually the official rosters of ordained ministers and of commissioned ministers for publication in *The Lutheran Annual*, with the assistance of his district's circuit visitors, promote and pursue unanimous participation by congregations in the submission of annual statistical reports as an expectation of membership in the Synod.~~

5.2.3 Each circuit visitor shall assist the district president within the circuit.

- (a) He shall serve under the direction of and be accountable to the district president and shall serve as his spokesman when so authorized and directed and shall assist him in doctrinal and spiritual supervision.
- (b) He shall serve in a servant role.
- (c) He shall seek to remind and encourage members of the circuit of their responsibilities as God's people and the privilege they have in being about His mission.
- (d) He and any other officers of the circuit shall have the primary responsibility for maintaining liaison between the circuit and the Synod at the national and district levels.
- (e) He shall be conversant with and supportive of Synod-wide and district resolutions and programs.
- (f) He shall seek to strengthen the spirit of cooperation among pastors, commissioned ministers, and congregations.
- (g) He shall assist in the development and attainment of Synod-wide mission and ministry emphases.
- (h) He shall assist the district president, as requested, in promoting and obtaining unanimous participation by congregations in the submission of annual statistical reports.
- (i) He may, when requested to do so by the district president, serve as a mediator to effect reconciliation of disputes within the circuit not under dispute resolution of the Synod as outlined in section 1.10 of these Bylaws.
- (ij) He shall regularly convene the pastors of his circuit for circuit conferences.
- (jk) He shall regularly report on his activities to the district president.
- (kl) The district president shall meet with the circuit visitors of the district at least once per year to discuss their work, to encourage them, and to conduct ongoing training for congregational and pastoral visits.
- (lm) The circuit visitor is authorized to draw on the district treasury for his expenses.

B. Submission of Circuit Visitor Nominee Names (13-050)

Preamble

A bylaw provision requiring the submission of names of circuit visitor nominees prior to the day of the circuit forum to elect the circuit visitor was inadvertently omitted when the current process was adopted by the 2010 LCMS convention. Such a provision does currently exist in the circuit forum election process for national convention voting delegates.

The Commission on Handbook proposes restoring this day-prior requirement for submission of names of circuit visitor nominees, thereby mirroring the language of Bylaw 3.1.2.1 (e) by amending Bylaw paragraphs 5.2.2 (b) and (d).

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 5.2.2 paragraphs (b) and (d) be amended to restore the day-prior requirement for submission of names of circuit visitor nominees, 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.
- (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).
- (d) All nominated pastors serving congregations and emeriti pastors, whose names were nominated prior to the day of the circuit forum, shall be eligible for election in accordance with section 4.3 of these Bylaws.

C. To Clarify Bylaws re Circuit Forums and Electoral Circuit Forums

Rationale

Current Bylaw section 5.3, which defines and details the responsibilities of visitation circuit forums, includes information regarding electoral circuit meetings (as anticipated by Bylaw 3.1.2). Removing those references from Bylaw section 5.3 and inserting them into Bylaw 3.1.2 will provide clarity for distinguishing between visitation circuits and electoral circuits. The Commission on Handbook therefore proposes the following bylaw changes.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That new wording be introduced into Bylaw 3.1.2 that retains and relocates the content of current Bylaw 5.3.3 regarding electoral circuit meetings, as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Electoral Circuits and Voting Delegates

3.1.2 ~~Voting delegates shall consist of one pastor and one layman from each electoral circuit. 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 communicate membership ranging from 1,500 to 10,000.
- (b) Voting delegates shall consist of one pastor and one layperson from each electoral circuit. These pastoral and lay delegates and their alternates shall be elected according to the regulations of the Synod (Bylaw 3.1.2.1).
- (c) Exceptions to these requirements may be made only by the President of the Synod upon request of a district board of directors.
- (d) The lay delegate shall serve throughout the triennium following the convention as an advisory member of the circuit forum.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 5.3.3 be amended to read as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

5.3.3 The circuit forum ~~will~~shall meet at least once triennially to elect ~~circuit delegates to the national convention. It shall elect the pastoral and lay delegates and their alternates to the national convention of the Synod according to the regulations of the Synod. The lay delegate shall, upon election, serve through the triennium following the next convention as an advisory member of the circuit forum.~~ circuit visitor (Bylaw 5.2.2).

Commission on Handbook

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COMMISSION ON HANDBOOK 2016 LCMS Convention

OMNIBUS OVERTURE #5 (Regional Elections)

The Commission on Handbook recognizes that its proposed overtures to the 2016 convention can be grouped together according to same-subject matter to facilitate the work of the floor committee. This “omnibus” overture groups the commission’s bylaw change proposals regarding **regional elections** into a single overture for the floor committee’s convenience.

A. To Establish Consistent Regional Election Eligibility Requirements

Rationale

Bylaw 3.12.1 (b) states as a general principle regarding regional elections that “individuals will be considered a part of the geographical region where their congregational membership is held.” Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (a) states that nominations for all regional positions shall be limited to persons “with residence” in the designated region. In addition, Bylaw 3.12.2.7 (a) contains a parenthetical statement regarding non-geographic-district congregations that better suits the purpose and content of Bylaw 3.12.1.

The Commission on Handbook therefore proposes the following changes to Bylaws 3.12.1 (b) and 3.12.2.7 (a).

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 3.12.1 (b) and 3.12.2.7 (a) be amended to establish consistency in the bylaws regarding eligibility for regional elections, as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.12.1 For all elections requiring regional representation, the Board of Directors of the Synod and the Council of Presidents, acting jointly, shall designate five geographic regions.

(a) Regions shall be designated 24 months prior to conventions of the Synod and shall take into consideration geographical and number-of-congregations information in the interest of fair representation.

(b) ~~For purposes of regional elections, individuals will be considered a part of the geographical region where their congregational membership is held. Non-geographic-district congregations shall be regarded as members of the region in which they are located.~~ Canadian congregations will be placed as a whole into the region which the Board of Directors and the Council of Presidents deem appropriate.

(c) ...

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. (This shall also be the process used for all other regional elections.)

(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) ...

B. Regional Board Member Vacancies

Rationale

Bylaw 3.2.5 states, “Unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws, vacancies that occur on elected boards or commissions of the Synod shall be filled by the Board of Directors of the Synod.” The bylaw goes on to outline the process to be used.

The Board for National Mission and the Board for International Mission are boards elected by conventions of the Synod. Bylaw 3.12.2.7 provides the nominations and elections process for regional elections but does not provide a process for filling vacant positions. It is assumed, therefore, that such vacancies are to be filled by the Synod’s Board of Directors according to the process outlined by Bylaw 3.2.5. A question remains, however, regarding the gathering of the list of nominees required by paragraph (a) of the bylaw, given the regional requirements of a regional board position.

The Commission on Handbook therefore proposes the following changes to the wording of Bylaw 3.2.5 to clarify and facilitate the process to fill regional board member vacant positions.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.2.5 be amended to clarify that the Board of Directors of the Synod is responsible for filling vacancies in regional board member positions, as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.2.5 Unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws, vacancies that occur on elected boards or commissions of the Synod, including regional board member positions, shall be filled by the Board of Directors of the Synod.

(a) Within 90 days of notification of the vacancy, the Secretary of the Synod shall be responsible for gathering a list of nominees from the board or commission where the vacancy occurs, the President of the Synod, the district boards of directors, and the slate of candidates from the previous convention of the Synod ~~within 90 days of notification of the vacancy~~.

(b) In the case of regional board member vacancies, only names of nominees with residence in the geographical region represented by the vacant position shall be received, gathered only from the district boards of directors within that geographical region.

(bc) A list of at least three but no more than five candidates shall be submitted as soon as possible to the appropriate appointing body.

(cd) This list shall be determined by the chairman and two members of the Committee for Convention Nominations of the Synod as determined by the committee. The Synod’s Director of Human Resources shall be consulted in developing the candidate list.

(de) The appointing board may not amend the list of candidates.

Commission on Handbook

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COMMISSION ON HANDBOOK 2016 LCMS Convention

OMNIBUS OVERTURE #2 (Synod Administration)

The Commission on Handbook recognizes that its proposed overtures to the 2016 convention can be grouped together according to same-subject matter to facilitate the work of the floor committee. This “omnibus” overture groups the commission’s bylaw change proposals regarding Synod administration into a single overture for the floor committee’s convenience.

A. To Remove Bylaw Provisions Adopted by the 2013 Convention for Staggering Terms

Rationale

The final paragraphs of Bylaws 3.8.2.2 and 3.8.3.2 were adopted by the 2013 convention to create staggered terms beginning with the 2016–2019 triennium. Similarly, Bylaw 3.9.4.1 was amended to create staggered terms when the voting members of the Commission on Handbook are appointed for the 2016–2019 triennium.

Since these were temporary changes that will have accomplished their purpose with the 2016 mission board elections and 2013–2016 triennium Commission on Handbook appointments, the following bylaw changes will restore the bylaws to their pre-2013-convention content.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the following changes be made to Bylaws 3.8.2.2 and 3.8.3.2 by the 2016 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.8.2.2 The Board for National Mission shall be comprised of eleven members:

1. Five laypersons and five individual members of the Synod (one of each from each region of the Synod) elected in the same manner as are regional members of the Board of Directors of the Synod (By-laws 3.12.1 and 3.12.2.7)
2. The President of the Synod or his representative
~~In 2016, the laypersons elected from the Great Plains and East/Southeast regions and the individual members of the Synod elected from the West/Southwest, Central, and Great Lakes regions shall be elected for three-year terms:~~

3.8.3.2 The Board for International Mission shall be comprised of eleven members:

1. Five laypersons and five individual members of the Synod (one of each from each region of the Synod) elected in the same manner as are regional members of the Board of Directors of the Synod (see Bylaws 3.12.1 and 3.12.2.7)
2. The President of the Synod or his representative
~~In 2016, the individual members of the Synod elected from the Great Plains and East/Southeast regions and the laypersons elected from the West/Southwest, Central, and Great Lakes regions shall be elected for three-year terms:~~

and be it further

Resolved, That the wording of Bylaw 3.9.4.1 be amended as follows, effective with the appointment of Commission on Handbook members for the 2016–2019 triennium:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

3.9.4.1 The Commission on Handbook shall consist of eight members, five voting and three nonvoting;

1. Of the five appointed voting members, three shall be individual members of the Synod and two shall be attorneys, whose terms shall be for six years, renewable once. ~~In 2016, one of the individual members and one of the attorneys shall be appointed for three-year terms. The remaining individual members and attorney shall be appointed for six-year terms.~~
2. The Chief Administrative Officer of the Synod, the Secretary of the Synod, and an additional member of the Commission on Constitutional Matters shall serve as advisory members.

3.9.4.1.1 2: The five voting members of the Commission on Handbook shall be appointed in the following manner:

- (a) Candidates shall be nominated only by district boards of directors and presented to the Council of Presidents through the office of the Secretary of the Synod.
- (b) ...

B. To Clarify the Role of the Synod President in Executive Appointment Processes

Rationale

The President of the Synod has a role in the appointment of certain staff positions of corporate Synod and certain agencies of the Synod, including the executive directors of the offices of national and international mission and the chief executives of the synodwide corporate entities, a role that differs in these appointment processes (Bylaw 3.3.1.3 [e]).

The current wording of the bylaw does not adequately differentiate between the two processes, thereby creating confusion. To clarify, the following bylaw changes are proposed to the 2016 LCMS convention.

Proposed Action

Resolved, That current Bylaw 3.3.1.3 (e) be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**Powers and Duties—Ecclesiastical and Administrative**

3.3.1.3 The President shall have responsibilities and duties that are both ecclesiastical and administrative.

...

- (e) Prior to appointing his appointment of an executive director of a mission office, he shall engage in consultation with the appropriate mission board to reach concurrence on a slate of candidates for the position, of executive director of a mission office.

- (f) He shall engage in consultation with each mission board, commission, and the governing board of each synodwide corporate entity to reach mutual concurrence on a slate of candidates for appointment to the position of chief executive or executive director.

- (fg) As ecclesiastical supervisor, he shall provide leadership to all officers, agencies, and national office staff of the Synod. Through the Chief Mission Officer, he shall supervise the duties listed in Bylaws 3.4.3–3.4.3.8.

...

C. To Stipulate Commissions Meeting Requirement

Rationale

Synod Bylaw 1.5.3 requires every Synod agency to meet at least quarterly unless otherwise stipulated in the bylaws, exceptions requiring approval at least annually by the President of the Synod. In the case of the Commission on Constitutional Matters, and possibly other commissions, responsibilities vary considerably from year to year depending upon business to be addressed.

It is in the fiduciary interest of the Synod that groups such as commissions do not incur unnecessary meeting expenses. The following proposed overture would introduce a stipulation into the bylaws (new Bylaw 3.9.1.1) that would reduce the quarterly meeting requirement for commissions of the Synod to at least two times per year.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That a new Bylaw 3.9.1.1 be inserted in Bylaw section 3.9 as follows:

PROPOSED WORDING

3.9.1 The commissions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are the following:

1. Commission on Constitutional Matters
2. Commission on Doctrinal Review
3. Commission on Handbook
4. Commission on Theology and Church Relations

3.9.1.1 Commissions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod shall meet as they deem necessary but at least two times per year to carry out their assigned responsibilities.

D. To Clarify Responsibility of the Commission on Handbook

Rationale

Bylaw 3.9.4.2 (e) assigns responsibility to the Commission on Handbook to respond to requests from agencies of the Synod that

propose new provisions to address specific handbook-related issues that surface between conventions. The role of the commission is to assist such agencies when developing bylaw proposals to determine their language (terminology) and suitability for incorporation into the *Handbook*, thereby to maintain its integrity and good order.

A number of agencies have requested that the Commission on Handbook create and propose new bylaws addressing topics referenced by the requesting agency without indication as to what the bylaw solution should be. Such requests place the commission in an advocacy rather than assisting role. Recognizing that existing Bylaw 3.9.4.2 (e) governing that role of the commission may not be sufficiently clear, the commission proposes the following additional wording.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.9.4.2 (e) be amended as follows:

PROPOSED WORDING

3.9.4.2 The Commission on Handbook shall maintain the *Handbook* of the Synod.

...

- (e) It shall respond to requests from agencies of the Synod to propose new provisions to address specific *Handbook*-related issues that surface between conventions. In responding to such requests, the role of the commission will be to assist requesting agencies in formulating bylaw changes, not to develop and/or advocate specific substantive solutions or modifications to existing *Handbook* provisions.

E. To Clarify the Process for Calling, Ordaining or Commissioning, and Installing Missionaries

Rationale

The general rule that governs calls, ordinations, commissionings, and installations is that the president of the district from which a call originates provides counsel, signs documents, and authorizes ordinations or commissionings and installations of called ordained or commissioned ministers. This general rule holds true for first calls of candidates as well as second and subsequent calls and installations of rostered church workers.

The Bylaws of the Synod in general support this rule, also in the case of candidates and rostered workers called to serve as missionaries in foreign mission fields. Because such calls by the Board for International Mission (and non-foreign specialized ministry calls by the Board for National Mission) originate in the Missouri District, the president of the Missouri District provides counsel and signs documents. Several current bylaws, however, take exception to the general rule when addressing authorization of ordinations or commissionings and installations of missionaries.

The introduction of this exception, while certainly well intended for such special occasions as the ordination, commissioning, and/or installation of missionaries, departs from the ecclesiastical supervisory norm that is otherwise consistent throughout the pertinent bylaws of the Synod. What appear to be conflicting requirements in these bylaws have caused some disagreement and confusion.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the proposed changes to the following bylaws be adopted by the 2016 LCMS convention to provide uniformity

throughout the ordination or commissioning and installation procedures of the Synod.

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.9 Assignment of First Calls

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 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 suggestions and recommendations~~ shall be an essential part of the final recommendation to the Board of Assignments.

2.10 Ordination, Commissioning, and Initial Installations

...

2.10.3 The president of the district of which the calling congregation is a member or in which the eligible calling ~~body~~ agency or other calling body is located or with which it is otherwise identified shall be responsible for the rites of ordination and commissioning of candidates for the ministry called to that congregation, ~~or agency, or other calling body.~~

- (a) The rite of ordination or commissioning should normally take place in the presence of the congregation, agency, or other calling body ~~to~~ by which the candidate has been called.
- (b) In the case of missionaries called by the Synod, members of a faculty of an institution of the Synod, or ~~institutional chaplains non-foreign specialized ministers~~ called by the Synod, the rite shall take place in a setting approved by the district president of the calling entity.
- (c) If an unusual circumstance warrants it, ~~as in the case of missionaries and non-foreign specialized ministers,~~ the appropriate district president may authorize that the rite take place in the home congregation of the candidate; or ~~another appropriate congregation,~~ with the permission of the calling congregation or other agency or calling body.
- (d) A service of celebration on the part of the candidate’s home congregation is encouraged.
- (e) The district president shall issue a diploma of ordination or commissioning.

4.4 District President

...

4.4.3 The district president of the calling congregation, agency, or other calling body (e.g., in the case of corporate-Synod-issued calls, the president of the Missouri District) shall represent the Synod in connection with all ordinations, commissionings, and installations.

- (a) ***First calls:*** Ordinations, commissionings, and initial installations shall be conducted by or at the direction of the district president when the requirements of Bylaw 2.10.2 (a) have been satisfied.
- (b) ***Missionaries and non-foreign specialized ministers:*** The authorization for the ordination or commissioning and the installation of a missionary called into the foreign fields, whether as a first or subsequent call, shall be ~~provided~~ issued upon the request of the Board for International Mission by the president of the ~~district in which the missionary resides Missouri District.~~ The authorization ~~with respect to~~ for the ordination or commissioning and the installation ~~for service of Synod-called non-foreign specialized ministers within a district of the Synod,~~ whether as a first or subsequent call, shall be

~~issued~~ provided upon the request of the Board for National Mission by the president of that district the Missouri District.

- (c) **Synod staff members:** Ordained and commissioned ministers who are members of the Synod called ~~or appointed~~ by the Synod to serve the national Synod shall be installed, in accordance with forms and practices developed by the Synod for that purpose, by the president of the Missouri District, or by his representative.
- (d) **Professors and instructional staff members:** Ordained and commissioned ministers who are members of the Synod called ~~or appointed~~ to serve at the Synod's educational institutions as professors and instructional staff members shall be installed, in accordance with forms and practices developed by the Synod for that purpose, by the president of the district in which the institution is located; or by his representative.
- (e) **Second and subsequent installations of ministers:** Except as ~~provided in the foregoing paragraphs;~~ Rostered ordained ministers and commissioned ministers who have been duly called to a positions of full- ~~or part-time~~ service shall be installed upon authorization provided by the appropriate district president of the district from which the call originates. Each installation shall be conducted, in accordance with forms and practices developed by the Synod for that purpose, by the district president or by an ordained minister designated by the district president.

Commission on Handbook

11-54

To Amend Process for Filling Regional Vice-President Vacancies

WHEREAS, The nominations of the Synod's regional vice-presidents come only from the congregations of the region over which they will serve and not from the floor (cf. Bylaw 3.12.2.7 [c, d]); and

WHEREAS, The election of the Synod's regional vice-presidents is done by the entire assembly of delegates to the national convention (cf. Bylaw 3.12.2.7 [e]); and

WHEREAS, This method ensures that the initial selection of a region's vice-president is of the mutual support of congregations in that region; and

WHEREAS, Other vacancies in the Synod's boards, commissions, and offices are filled by lists presented by the represented body to be selected from (cf. Bylaw 3.9.5.3.1 [a] [2]; 3.10.4.4 [a]; 3.10.4.6.2; and 3.10.5.3); and

WHEREAS, The current method for filling midterm vacancies does not ensure that the region's vice-president is of the same support of congregations within the region; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.12.2.7 be amended as follows:

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. (This shall also be the process used for all other regional elections.)

- (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).
- (c) The names of the five ministers of religion—ordained residing with-

in 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.
- (e) Voting delegates to the national convention shall be entitled to vote for one of the candidates from each 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.
- (f) Balloting shall continue with the candidate receiving the least number of votes eliminated until one candidate from each region has received a majority of the votes cast.
- (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
- (h) A vacancy in the office of regional vice-president shall be filled in the following manner:

(1) The lower ranked regional vice-presidents shall advance in rank, leaving the vacant position to be the office of the sixth vice-president (i.e., in the vacancy of the second vice-president, the third vice-president shall become second and fourth shall become third, etc.)

(2) The President of the Synod shall now appoint a new sixth vice-president to fill the vacant regional vice-president position, using the list of nominated candidates for that region from the previous Synod convention who still reside within the boundaries of that geographical region, who received the next greatest number of votes at the previous Synod convention.

(3) If that candidate is unwilling or unable to serve, the President of the Synod shall appoint the candidate with the next greatest number of votes, proceeding until a candidate is chosen from that list.

(4) If none of the candidates from the previous Synod convention are able or willing to serve, the district presidents of that region will convene to nominate, with a two-thirds majority, a minister of religion—ordained from the clergy roster of the Synod with residence in its designated region as candidate for regional vice-president.

(5) The President of the Synod shall now appoint this nominee as the new sixth vice-president.

Board of Directors
New Jersey District

11-55

To Amend Bylaw Process for Election of Synod Regional Vice-Presidents

WHEREAS, The nominations of the Synod's regional vice-presidents come only from the congregations of the region over which they will serve and not from the floor (cf. Bylaw 3.12.2.7 [c, d]); and

WHEREAS, This method ensures that the initial selection of a region's vice-president enjoys the mutual support of congregations in that region; and

WHEREAS, Regional vice-presidents are elected by the entire assembly and not the region from which they will represent, support, and provide oversight; and

WHEREAS, This does not ensure that the region's vice-president enjoys the same support of the congregations from within that region; and

WHEREAS, This is disconnected from the original nomination of the regional vice-presidents from the congregations over which he will serve and not from the assembly as a whole; 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. (This shall also be the process used for all other regional elections.)

- (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).
- (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 delegates from that geographical region (including any non-geographic district congregations in that region) to the Synod convention shall select by majority vote each the regional vice-president for their own geographic region.
- ~~(d) No opportunity shall be provided for additional nominations from the floor of the convention.~~
- (d) 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 voter list for the election of the regional vice-presidents in coordination with the secretaries of the districts. This list and any of its parts shall not be disseminated.
 - (1) This list shall include two voting delegates from each congregation in attendance at the previous district conventions who remain members of the congregations they represented.
 - (2) If one or both delegates are unavailable, congregations shall be provided opportunity to select substitute voters.
- ~~(e) Voting delegates to the national convention shall be entitled to vote for one of the candidates from each 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.~~
- (e) Four 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 in attendance at the previous district conventions (or substitute voters as selected according to Bylaw 3.12.2.7 [d]) to vote for one of the candidates for regional vice-president of the geographic region in which the voting delegate resides. 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, the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be retained on the ballot, and another vote shall be taken in the same manner.
- ~~(f) Balloting shall continue with the candidate receiving the least number of votes eliminated until one candidate from each region has received a majority of the votes cast.~~
- (f) 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.

- (g) Upon the election of the regional vice-presidents, a final election will take place at the Synod convention ranking the vice-presidents by separate ballots with a simple majority of Synod convention voting delegates determining the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth vice-presidents in line of succession.

Board of Directors
New Jersey District

11-56

To Clarify and Confirm the Distinction between Synod and Corporate Synod and to Provide Consistency for the Meaning of "Property of the Synod"

Rationale

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was originally founded as a *synodical union* in April, 1847. Its original name was "The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States." Ultimately, in 1947, the synodical union—the Synod—shortened its name to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

In 1894, the Synod voted to form a Missouri benevolent *corporation* under Chapter 352 of the Missouri Statutes called "The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States." The corporation's name eventually was also changed to "The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod."

In 1967, the corporation filed Articles of Acceptance with the State of Missouri to convert to a nonprofit corporation pursuant to the General Not for Profit Corporation Act, Chapter 355 of the Missouri Statutes. The corporation's Articles of Incorporation have been amended from time to time, and the current Articles are included in the *Handbook of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*.

Article XIV of the Synod's Constitution provides that "[t]he Synod in convention may adopt bylaws that are consistent with and do not contradict the Constitution of the Synod." The Synod's Bylaws also serve as the bylaws of the corporate entity.

The Synod's Bylaws have been amended fairly regularly over the past 150 years. Some of the amendments were designed to recognize the distinction between the synodical union (Synod) and the Missouri nonprofit corporation of the same name. An example of such is current (2013) Bylaw 1.2, which includes definitions of "Synod" and "Corporate Synod."

Bylaw 1.2.1 (f) provides, in pertinent part: "**Corporate Synod:** The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Missouri nonprofit corporation, including its offices, boards, commissions, and departments" Bylaw 1.2.1 (u) states: "**Synod:** Refers collectively to the association of self-governing Lutheran congregations and all its agencies on the national and district levels. The Synod, as defined herein, is not a civil law entity." [The term "Agency" is defined in Bylaw 1.2.1 (a).]

Because the name of the Synod and the name of the Missouri nonprofit corporate entity are identical, certain provisions of the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws could be viewed as ambiguous and, therefore, should be amended for clarity and consistency.

One such bylaw that should be clarified for at least two different reasons is Bylaw 1.2.1 (q), which defines "Property of the Synod" as "[a]ll assets, real or personal, tangible or intangible, whether situated in the United States or elsewhere, titled or held in the name of the Synod, its nominee, or an agency of the Synod. 'Property of

the Synod' does not include any assets held by the Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod or by an agency of the Synod in a fiduciary capacity (including, for purpose of example, the funds managed for the Concordia Plans by Concordia Plan Services and certain funds held by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation.)"

First, the current definition, especially when read in light of the definition of "Synod," could lead to an erroneous understanding that the Synod owns the property of member congregations. Such a misunderstanding would be inconsistent with Article VII 2 of the Constitution, which clearly states, "Membership of a congregation in the Synod gives the Synod no equity in the property of the congregation." Clarification for consistency could be made by amending Bylaw 1.2.1 (q) to expressly exclude property of congregations from the definition.

Second, Article XI E of the Constitution should be amended to reflect more clearly that the duties of the Board of Directors include serving as the legal representative of both the Synod and corporate Synod, and to clarify that the Board of Directors' role as custodian of the property of the Synod includes, in particular, property held by or titled in the name of corporate Synod or its nominee. This is not a change in responsibilities but rather a clarification.

These amendments would benefit the Synod and its members by providing clarity and consistency between the Constitution and the Bylaws.

Proposed Action by the Convention

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS *Handbook* be revised as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Article IV Powers

The Synod in convention is empowered to and has formed corporate entities which shall have legal powers:

1. To purchase, hold, administer, and sell property of every description in the interest of the Synod;
2. To accept, hold, administer, and, if deemed advisable, dispose of legacies, donations, commercial papers, and legal documents of every description in the interest of its work.

Article XI E Composition and Duties of the Board of Directors

2. The Board of Directors is the legal representative ~~of the Synod. It is the and~~ custodian of all ~~the property of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod the Synod,~~ directly or by its delegation of such authority to an agency of the Synod. It shall exercise supervision over all ~~the property of the Synod and business affairs of the Synod The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod~~ except in those areas where it has delegated such authority to an agency of the Synod or where the voting members of the Synod through the adoption of bylaws or by other convention action have assigned specific areas of responsibility to separate corporate or trust entities, as to those the Board of Directors shall have general oversight responsibility as set for in the Bylaws. For the purposes of this article, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod includes both the Synod formed by this Constitution and the Missouri corporation formed by the Synod.

Bylaw 1.2 Definitions 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:
...

- (q) **Property of the Synod:** All assets, real or personal, tangible or intangible, whether situated in the United States or elsewhere, titled or

held in the name of ~~the Synod or corporate Synod~~, its nominee, or an agency of the Synod. "Property of the Synod" does not include any assets held by member congregations, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod, or by an agency of the Synod in a fiduciary capacity (including, for purposes of example, the funds managed for the Concordia Plans by Concordia Plan Services and certain funds held by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation).

LCMS Board of Directors

11-57

To Require LCMS Foundation to Use Biblical Dispute Resolution to Settle Disputes with Donors

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod professes the Bible to be the actual Word of God and, therefore, totally truthful, reliable, and free from any error; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS believes that the Scriptures are the ultimate standard by which we must judge everything that we believe, teach, confess, and practice; and

WHEREAS, We live in a sinful world where property disputes between individuals and organizations are often settled through lawsuits in courts of law; and

WHEREAS, Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 6 clearly express God's expectations for the settling of disputes, specifically directing disputes be settled by the saints rather than the ungodly; and

WHEREAS, The meaning of the Ninth Commandment in Luther's Small Catechism directs us "to 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"; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS is obligated to fulfill the meaning of the Ninth Commandment; that is, "to 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 rather "help and be of service to him in keeping it" when receiving inheritance gifts from individuals and organizations; and

WHEREAS, Disputes related to inheritance gifts from individuals and organizations have arisen in which the LCMS Foundation has used the court system rather than working through biblical conflict resolution and reconciliation resources at its disposal; and

WHEREAS, Ambassadors of Reconciliation, a recognized service organization of the LCMS, provides biblical conflict resolution and reconciliation that is in harmony with the doctrine and practice of the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS examine the policies and procedures of receiving gifts so that when disputes arise regarding the reception of gifts, biblical procedures for resolving these disputes are implemented; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS involve the congregations and pastors of the parties in dispute when conflicts arise; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS Foundation be directed to follow biblical dispute resolution procedures when property disagreements arise over inheritance gifts, in order that disputes of this nature are addressed in accordance with God's Word and the doctrine and practices of the LCMS, and that resolution of such disputes brings glory to God.

Our Savior
Valentine, NE

FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

12. Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R10, R56, R57, R58, R60, R65

OVERTURES

12-01

To Amend Bylaws to Provide Opportunity for Presidential Doctrinal Supervision

WHEREAS, On January 26, 2015, Synod President Matthew Harrison issued the following statement:

Regarding a recent decision of a panel not to proceed with charges regarding a public false teacher in the LCMS.

When a public teacher on the roster of the Synod can without consequence publicly advocate the ordination of women (even participate vested in the installation of an ELCA clergy person), homosexuality, the errancy of the Bible, the historical-critical method, open communion with the Reformed, evolution, and more, then the public confession of the Synod is meaningless. I am saying that if my Synod does not change its inability to call such a person to repentance and remove such a teacher or where there is no repentance, then we are liars and our confession is meaningless. I do not want to belong to such a Synod, much less lead it. I have no intention of walking away from my vocation. I shall rather use it and, by the grace of God, use all the energy I have to call this Synod to fidelity to correct this situation.

and

WHEREAS, Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church as a member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod cannot sit idly by when the public confession of the church body it is a member of is openly challenged by a member of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church of Chesapeake, Virginia, commend Synod President Matthew Harrison for the position he has taken, commend the conventions of the Southern Illinois District and Northern Illinois District for their recent actions relative to Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker, and urge, if there is no repentance, that the expulsion process be commenced; and be it further

Resolved, That any needed changes to the Synod's Bylaws be made by the 2016 LCMS Convention so that the President of the Synod truly can exercise the doctrinal oversight he is charged with under the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws.

Faith
Chesapeake, VA

12-02

To Return to Pastoral-Based Model of Governance

WHEREAS, Regarding church governance we confess, "Therefore the Church can never be better governed and preserved than if we all live under one head, Christ, and all the bishops equal in office (although they be unequal in gifts), be diligently joined in unity of doctrine, faith, Sacraments, prayer, and works of love, etc., as St. Jerome writes that the priests at Alexandria together and in common governed the churches, as did also the apostles, and afterwards all bishops throughout all Christendom, until the Pope raised his head above all" (SA II IV 9); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has accepted C. F. W. Walther's *Church and Ministry* as a correct explanation of our Lutheran Confessions, in which we state, "The holy ministry, or the pastoral office, is an office distinct from the priestly office, which belongs to all believers. ... The ministry is the highest office in the Church, from which, as its stem, all other offices of the Church issue" (*Church and Ministry*, Theses 1, 9); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church in her official confession makes the following complaint against the Roman Church: "[T]hey neither are, nor wish to be, true bishops, but worldly lords and princes, who will neither preach, nor teach, nor baptize, nor administer the Lord's Supper, nor perform any work or office of the Church..." (SA III X 1); and

WHEREAS, Over the years, the LCMS has allowed district presidents to leave the pastoral office in the congregation in order to serve as "ecclesiastical supervisors," which means that we remove men from "the highest office in the church" and give them so many worldly duties that they are no longer officially connected to the pulpit, font, and altar of a congregation, which means that they do not have regular opportunity to "preach, nor teach, nor baptize, nor administer the Lord's Supper," but rather must serve in an office that is first and foremost beholden to the Bylaws of the Synod rather than the Word of God; and

WHEREAS, The apostles themselves rejected this practice, choosing instead to labor in the Word and prayer: "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables" (Acts 6:2); and

WHEREAS, Our Synod President has set an admirable precedent by accepting a call to a local parish to serve as a pastor, thereby continuing to preach, teach, baptize, and administer the Lord's Supper, as our Confessions admonish us to do; and

WHEREAS, A majority of districts have at least one and often several pastors who have been asked to leave service at the altar and pulpit of a congregation in order to serve as Synod officers or executives, and the national Synod allows for the same exclusively extra-congregational service; and

WHEREAS, The Word of God, in Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, extols the reverse of this practice and admonishes against our current practice; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS begin the process of returning to a parish-based model of governance; and be it further

Resolved, That a temporary Blue Ribbon Commission on Synod Administration (BRCSA) be formed, which will be considered an ad hoc committee for purposes of Synod service, and that this commission be empowered to evaluate the duties of the officers of the Synod and to recommend such changes as are necessary so that they can continue to fulfill their constitutional and bylaw required duties while also serving faithfully in a congregation, the commission to be composed of seven persons chosen by the President of the Synod according to the following manner: one district president serving full time; one district president who at the time that this resolution is approved is serving both as a district president and as a parish pastor; a vice president of the Synod; a parish pastor; a faculty member from the Concordia University System who teaches business or administration; a member of the CCM or Commission on Handbook; and a layperson; and be it further

Resolved, That the BRCSA report recommend the necessary operational changes, amending Bylaw 2.11.1 at the 2019 convention by deleting subparagraphs (d), (e), (f), and (j), and replacing

the following words from subparagraph (k) “An executive or professional staff member” with “a deployed missionary or teacher”; and be it further

Resolved, That the final report of the BRCSA, with recommendations for returning to a pastoral-based model of governance, be delivered to the Synod no later than the beginning of the first district convention in 2018 for consideration at the 2019 KCNS convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That nothing in this resolution be so construed as to apply to emeritus members of the Synod.

Grace
Paris, TX

12-03

To Allow Placement of Pastoral Candidates Who Have Previously Served

WHEREAS, Christ commanded His Church to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send workers into His harvest (Matt. 9:38; Luke 10:2); and

WHEREAS, The Lord has provided pastors who have been called by the Church to service in parishes, in military chaplaincy, and in national and international mission; and

WHEREAS, There are a variety of reasons for which an ordained minister is released from a call and is not serving, including dissolution of the calling parish, medical concerns, loss of financial support, and others; and

WHEREAS, These ordained ministers, who are not under any discipline according to the Constitution and Bylaws of the LCMS and who are candidates for ministry, desire to continue to serve the Lord and His Church to which they have been called and ordained; and

WHEREAS, Some calling congregations enter in to the candidate placement process to secure the service of an ordained minister; and

WHEREAS, A placement process already exists, placing seminary candidates into congregations and mission positions (Bylaw 2.9); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents create an application process so that ordained ministers on candidate status and ministers completing service in the mission field or military chaplaincy service can enter the candidate placement process along with seminary graduates; and be it further

Resolved, That district presidents communicate to calling congregations the possibility of receiving a candidate that has had previous pastoral experience; and be it further

Resolved, That the first placement through the existing candidate placement process of inactive candidate-status ordained ministers with previous parish, missionary, or military experience would be possible by April 2017; and be it finally

Resolved, That LCMS congregations and members keep all pastors and congregations in their public and private prayers.

Trinity
Millstadt, IL

12-04

To Facilitate Call Process for Ordained Candidates

WHEREAS, God instituted the Office of the Holy Ministry for us to obtain saving faith in Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:13–19; 18:18–20; John 20:19–23; AC V) and filled the office at one time by calling and

sending apostles immediately (that is, without means: Matt. 10:1–4; Mark 3:13–19; Luke 6:12–16) but fills the office now by calling and sending pastors mediately (that is, through means such as congregations, pastors, and people together: Acts 14:23); and

WHEREAS, Insofar as both the people calling and those being called are at the same time saints and sinners, there never was nor will there ever be either a perfect call process or perfect pastors called, as even the example of Judas shows (Acts 1:12–26); and

WHEREAS, Some pastors’ called service ends appropriately due to false doctrine, offensive conduct, and willful neglect of duties (LCMS Constitution Art. XIII and Bylaw 2.13.2.1), and some pastors should not, either right away or ever, be called again, including some of those pastors designated “non-candidates” (according to Bylaw 2.11.2.3 but sometimes referred to as “inactive candidate status”) and those whose status is either restricted (Bylaw 2.13.2) or suspended (Bylaw 2.13.4); and

WHEREAS, Other pastors’ called service either ends inappropriately (by forced resignation or improper rescinding of the call) or ends appropriately for other reasons (e.g., completing a temporary term as a missionary or military chaplain, pursuing an advanced degree, or taking leave for medical treatment or to care for a family member) and such pastors should not be excluded from future calls, including some of those pastors designated “candidates” (according to Bylaw 2.11.2.2, but sometimes referred to as “active candidate status”); and

WHEREAS, Such candidates and their families can be in desperate situations (financially, emotionally, and spiritually), feeling ignored and having the impression that nothing is being done to help them return to a called position in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, District presidents have to deal with a wide variety of sad and difficult cases that grieve our Lord and His Church and do, to the best of their abilities, try to facilitate the calling of such candidates but ultimately can only counsel congregations (Bylaw 2.5.1); and

WHEREAS, Lay people in congregations, including those without a regularly-called pastor, are often not aware of how the call process works, of the number of such candidates available for and desirous of calls, or of such candidates’ availability for service to congregations without a regularly called pastor; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Res. 3-10A resulted in a task force to address these matters, but its report, recommendations, and any necessary bylaw changes were not available to the Synod in time for due consideration before the deadlines for submission of congregational overtures; and

WHEREAS, Taking action without such due consideration could lead to unintended and undesirable consequences; but

WHEREAS, Taking no action whatsoever for another triennium would only perpetuate the poor stewardship of not fully utilizing the gifts of God that such candidates are and would further contribute to their and their family’s distress; and

WHEREAS, Some substantive action could be taken without necessitating bylaw or other such changes; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod use the media at its disposal (*The Lutheran Witness*, *Reporter*, and electronic communications such as Synod blogs) to raise awareness of the situation of such candidates and, with God’s blessing, generate more congregational interest in calling such candidates; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod set up and maintain a secure, continuously updated, database-driven website, accessible by district presidents, that provides links to “Pastoral Information Forms” (PIFs) for all such candidates in the Synod who are available for and desirous of calls, which information district presidents, at their discretion,

could give to congregations without a regularly called pastor; and be it further

Resolved, That district presidents as strongly as possible counsel and otherwise encourage congregations to consider calling such candidates when appropriately matched to the congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That district presidents provide to congregations all requested PIFs and the accompanying “Self-Evaluation Tool” (SET) of eligible pastors (those not on restricted or suspended status); and be it finally

Resolved, That the Res. 3-10A task force’s report, recommendations, and any necessary bylaw changes be given full consideration during the 2016–2019 triennium, and that additional action based on that report be considered at the 2019 LCMS convention.

Pilgrim
Kilgore, TX

12-05

To Specify Inactive Members in Official Publications

WHEREAS, LCMS Bylaw 2.11.2 identifies three different classifications of inactive members (emeritus, candidate, and non-candidate); and

WHEREAS, The official publications of the LCMS Roster (e.g., *The Lutheran Annual* and the LCMS website) do not currently differentiate between the various classifications of inactive members; therefore be it

Resolved, That in all future official publications of the LCMS Roster (including but not limited to *The Lutheran Annual* and the LCMS website), the classification of inactive membership shall be indicated for all such ministers of religion who are inactive members on the LCMS roster.

Emmaus
South Bend, IN

12-06

To Work to Resolve the Issue of Qualified Candidates Remaining without Calls

WHEREAS, The 65th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod approved Res. 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 process”; and

WHEREAS, Efforts to encourage congregations to call ordained ministers on candidate status within the current process have 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 with this addition:

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 is authorized to place ordained ministers on candidate status at their request to congregations that have asked for a candidate each spring, under the following conditions:

- All new seminary graduates have received their first calls.
- 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 the congregation extending said call offers inadequate remuneration for the candidate to support himself and his family. If the reception of a call occurs between the placement decision by the Council of Presidents and the announcement of such a placement, or if 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 placement 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 at that time.
- If the candidate’s district president rejects the candidate’s request for placement, the candidate may appeal to the Synod’s Pastor Colloquy Committee to adjudicate, with both the candidate and his district president appearing before it according to rules to be established by the Colloquy Committee and approved by the Council of Presidents.

(e) The Secretary of the 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 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 changes, or that such an amendment be considered friendly to this resolution.

Jacksonville Circuit
Central Illinois District

12-07

To Remove Time Restriction on Candidate Status (Bylaw 2.11.2.2)

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (a) limits eligibility for candidate status to “a period not to exceed four years,” with no provision to extend candidate status beyond this period; and

WHEREAS, Once eligibility for candidate status expires, a pastor who would choose to remain on candidate status and who otherwise meets the criteria for continuing on candidate status enumerated in Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (c) must nevertheless choose between emeritus status (if 55 years or older), non-candidate status, or resignation—without the option of choosing candidate status; and

WHEREAS, Eligibility for candidate status for many inactive pastors who have patiently waited, hoped, and prayed for a call back into active ministry and who otherwise meet the criteria enumerated in Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (c) expires through no fault of their own; and

WHEREAS, Expiration of eligibility for candidate status for no other reason than the passage of time spent faithfully waiting, hoping, and praying is very demoralizing and discouraging for the pastor and his family (his wife in particular); and

WHEREAS, Reclassification to non-candidate status unnecessarily compounds the very real and unjustifiable stigma already suffered by the pastor and his family associated with candidate status, incorrectly implying to prospective call committees that the pastor fails to meet the criteria for continued candidate status (Bylaw 2.11.2.2 [c]); and

WHEREAS, Non-candidate status should be reserved only for those pastors who, given the option of continuing candidate status, instead choose non-candidate status or who fail to meet the criteria for continuing candidate status (Bylaw 2.11.2.2 [c]), and not for those pastors who have patiently waited, hoped, and prayed for a call back into active ministry and who otherwise meet the criteria for continuing candidate status (Bylaw 2.11.2.2 [c]); therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (a) 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.

(a) A candidate may be continued on the roster ~~for a period not to exceed four years~~ by act of the president of the district through which the person holds membership.

And be it further

Resolved, That pastors currently on non-candidate status who otherwise meet the criteria for candidate status (Bylaw 2.11.2.2 [c]) be allowed and encouraged to apply for reinstatement to candidate status under the amended Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (a).

Circuit 16, Southeastern District; Circuit 17, Southeastern District

12-08

To Amend Synod Bylaw 2.11.2.2 re Time Restriction for Candidate Status

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (a) does not explicitly grant the ability for a minister of religion on candidate status to remain on candidate status beyond the stated four-year window; and

WHEREAS, such ministers of religion may still wish to receive a divine call and be considered candidates; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (a) 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.

(a) A candidate in good standing will continue ~~may be continued~~ on the active candidate roster in the district in which the person holds membership as long as that candidate remains in good standing, unless that candidate requests a change of status through the district president, for a period not to exceed four years by act of the president of the district through which the person holds membership.

and be it further

Resolved, That all prior ordained clergy who had been in good standing and yet were removed from active candidate status only because of this mandated expiration be notified in writing by the Synod that they will be reinstated on the active candidate status as soon as such a person confirms that desire in writing to the current district president within three months of being thus notified.

Our Savior
Carmi, IL

12-09

To Amend Bylaw 2.11.2.2 to Provide for Placement of Candidates

WHEREAS, The 2013 Synod convention passed Res. 3-10A; and

WHEREAS, The 3-10A Task Force has submitted its report; and

WHEREAS, The 3-10A Task Force noted, “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”; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.11.2.2 be amended with the addition of a new paragraph (d):

(d) The Council of Presidents, acting as the Board of Assignments, shall regularly assign candidates of the Synod 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.

Ascension
Niles, IL

12-10

To Amend Synod Bylaw 2.11.2.2 re Candidate Status

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (a), as worded in the 2013 *Handbook*, does not explicitly grant the ability for a minister of religion on candidate status to remain on candidate status beyond the stated four-year window; and

WHEREAS, Such ministers of religion may still wish to receive a call and be considered candidates; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (a) be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

(a) A candidate may be continued on the roster for an indefinite ~~period of time not to exceed four years~~ by act of the president of the district through which the person holds membership.

Emmaus
South Bend, IN

12-11

To Appoint Task Force to Review and Evaluate Dispute Resolution Process

WHEREAS, The 1992 dispute resolution process brought needed and new elements to the Synod's reconciliation process; and

WHEREAS, The process has been amended over time; and

WHEREAS, There currently is potential for weakness involving conflict of interest and lack of objectivity in evaluating the need for formal proceedings to resolve conflict; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of the Synod convene a task force to identify weaknesses in the dispute resolution process and to offer suggestions for change to the process, if necessary; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force, appointed by the President of the Synod, be comprised of one representative from each seminary, one member of the Council of Presidents, one member of the CTCR, one member from the CCM, one ordained minister, one commissioned minister, and two laypeople; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force present its findings to the CCM for review prior to the 2019 LCMS convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That the task force bring its reports and recommendations to the 2019 LCMS convention for action.

Iowa District East

12-12

To Revise Dispute Resolution Process

Resolved, That the Indiana District in convention petition the 2016 LCMS convention to revise the dispute resolution and expulsion processes to be more expedient in dealing with cases of false doctrine.

Indiana District

12-13

To Restore Pre-1992 Adjudication, Expulsion, and Appeal Processes

WHEREAS, The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, paragraph 51, states, "Thus the pope exercises a twofold tyranny: he defends his errors by force and murders, and he forbids a judicial examination. The latter does more harm than all punishments, for when proper judicial process has been taken away, the churches are not able to remove impious teachings and impious forms of worship, and countless souls are lost generation after generation"; and

WHEREAS, Clear and certain public teaching requires independently supervised accountability to the Lutheran Confessions (Book of Concord) and Scripture; and

WHEREAS, Due to our nature after the fall, independently supervised accountability among men to affirm clear and certain public teaching requires a structure of independent checks and balances—all designed with specific intent to guide and protect both the church and household estates with clarity and certainty of public teaching; and

WHEREAS, The current judicial system defined in LCMS Bylaws combines the executive and judicial functions into the same office (namely, into the office of district president), which structure also has the effect of nullifying proper judicial process—a fault which the Book of Concord teaches causes more harm than all punishments; and

WHEREAS, Many have expressed frustration that there is evidence that the structure of doctrinal supervision is dysfunctional in the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod return to elected commissions on adjudication for its districts and a commission on appeals on the Synod level—upon which officers or staff of the Synod or districts shall NOT serve or influence their work; and be it further

Resolved, That only parish pastors and laymen (because the commissions will administer matters pertaining to the pastoral office) who are well instructed and informed by the Book of Concord and Scripture are to serve on these two commissions; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS *Handbook* be revised by the LCMS Commission on Handbook to restore the pre-1992 structures and processes for adjudication, expulsion, and appeals.

Trinity

New Haven, MO

12-14

To Assist and Encourage Resolution of Disputes Where Facts Are Unclear and Evidence Is Possessed by the Synod

WHEREAS, Evidence in the control of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is not available to those in a dispute with the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures encourage Christians to resolve disputes with the church; and

WHEREAS, We desire to encourage members of the LCMS to resolve a wider range of disputes within the Synod by establishing a process to uncover needed facts and evidence so that the dispute resolution process, defined in Bylaw 1.10, can be used by persons who do not have access to the evidence; and

WHEREAS, Without such a process, a just and fair conclusion cannot be reached; and

WHEREAS, With this process, a wider range of complaints can be adjudicated; and

WHEREAS, A fairer adjudication process will be possible as evidence, previously unavailable, will be made available; therefore be it

Resolved, That a process establishing a cooperative way to receive necessary evidence by parties in dispute, thereby allowing a more informed resolution of a wider variety of complaints and disputes, be adopted; and be it further

Resolved, That the following wording be added to Bylaw 1.10.5:

PROPOSED WORDING

Any person or persons who present a complaint of wrongdoing against the Synod or a Synod employee—where factual information is in the possession of the Synod and not available to the complainant, and where a finding of fact is required for a just resolution of the dispute—will be given, within 15 working days, a concise and clear written explanation of the LCMS policy regarding the handling of such complaints/disputes. The complainant will be offered access to the dispute resolution process of the Synod and will be assisted, as needed, by his/her pastor or an appointed Synod representative. The complainant will not be asked to forego access to the civil courts in order to activate a Synod investigation.

Any Synod employee or representative accused of wrongdoing by a complainant will be offered the same dispute resolution process.

If the complainant or the accused feels an investigation would be beneficial or necessary, the district president or Synod President (depending on proper jurisdiction) will choose an investigator with the approval of the complainant and the accused. If the alleged wrongdoing involves significant legal irregularities, the investigation will begin

within seven working days. In all instances, to the extent possible, the privacy, dignity, and integrity of the accuser and the accused will be respected. This shall not be used to excuse an incomplete investigation in said allegations. All information and documents known to and/or held by the Synod, together with all information gathered during the investigation, must be promptly, fully, and completely made available to the complainant and the accused by the investigator.

After the investigation has been completed and the information made available to the complainant and the accused, the dispute resolution process outlined in Bylaw 1.10 shall resume.

Circuit 8
Kansas District

12-15

To Form New Dispute Reconciliation Process

WHEREAS, The Mission Statement published in the foreword of the 2013 Synod *Handbook*, printed version, declares: “In grateful response to God’s grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities, and world.” This love from Christ binds our members to one another and commands us to treat each other with love and respect, avoiding public offense and sin; and

WHEREAS, The dispute resolution process was written to bring about Christian reconciliation between complainants and respondents whenever there has been grievous offense, as stated in Bylaw 1.10.1.3: “Christ’s ‘ministry of reconciliation’ is one of the church’s foremost priorities”; and Bylaw 1.10.1.2: “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)”; and

WHEREAS, This process depends upon the faithful and unbiased execution of the reconciliation process by the officers of Synod but provides no remedy where there has been a neglect by such officials in bringing this process to completion, other than to bring the matter to the Synod in convention, as stated in Article XI, Rights and Duties of Officers, A 1: “The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod, and in everything pertaining to their rights and the performance of their duties, they are responsible to the Synod”; and A 2: “The Synod at all times has the right to call its officers to account and, if circumstances require it, to remove them from office in accordance with Christian procedure”; and

WHEREAS, This creates an excessive burden upon the complainant or respondent if there has been a refusal on the part of either party to participate in the process, most especially if the complainant has been impeded, hindered, or otherwise unsupported by Synod officials, preventing the process from moving forward; and

WHEREAS, Our LCMS Constitution states in Article III that the duties of the Synod are 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”; and in Article VI, to “provide protection for congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers in the performance of their official duties and the maintenance of their rights,” which, if the complainant is required to make public accusation before the Synod, would lend itself to public controversy and offense when these matters require private resolution in the interest of reputations and honor; and

WHEREAS, Christ would have us seek other ways to bring about reconciliation by employing God-pleasing methods of reconciliation through appropriate forms of checks and balances apart from lengthy and burdensome processes as they are presently prescribed by the Bylaws of the Synod, which rely solely upon the good graces of Synod officials for execution; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention delegate to the faculties of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, the task of defining an evangelical and biblical process of reconciliation that would take place in a simple and Christian manner, free from conflicts of interests or impediments that could be imposed by Synod officials—a process that can rebuild fraternal relationships by means of the evangelical love that our Lord commands and expects within His Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the proposals of the seminaries be reported to the 2019 Synod convention with the goal that the convention would provide formal direction for the incorporation of a new reconciliation process in the Bylaws of the Synod.

Advent
Zionsville, IN

12-16

To Restore to Synod Praesidium Authority to Act in Discipline Cases If District President Fails to Act

WHEREAS, Termination or suspension of membership in the Synod is a serious matter involving both the doctrine and life of members and should be taken only as a final step, following advice, counsel, encouragement, and, when necessary, admonition regarding teaching and/or practice; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaws provide for the protection of members by including provisions for challenging the decisions of ecclesial supervisors in these matters, as well as provisions for restoration of membership that has been suspended or terminated; and

WHEREAS, The lingering existence of unresolved charges is also a great burden upon the church workers concerned, their congregations, and the church at large and, for the health and well-being of all, proceedings to resolve such matters should not unduly be delayed or prolonged; and

WHEREAS, Prior to the 2004 LCMS convention, there also existed a right of appeal to the LCMS Praesidium in matters of ecclesial supervision involving such serious disciplinary action under former Bylaw 2.27.2 (b), which stated:

- b. If the district president declines to suspend the member or fails to act within 90 days after receipt of the written complaint, the complainant may present the written complaint to the Praesidium of the Synod, which consists of the President and the vice-presidents of the Synod. If after investigation the Praesidium concludes that the facts form a basis for expulsion of the member under Article XIII of the Constitution, the Praesidium shall proceed in the same fashion as hereafter required of the district president. If the Praesidium determines not to proceed, it shall in writing so inform the complainant and the involved member, which shall terminate the matter.

and

WHEREAS, In order to ensure fair and consistent treatment of all members of Synod in a Christian and fraternal manner, and to ensure prompt resolution of disputes for the best interests of all concerned, it is appropriate that this right of appeal be restored and granted to all parties; therefore be it

Resolved, That the South Wisconsin District memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to restore to the LCMS *Handbook* in Bylaw section 2.14 the following:

If the district President declines to suspend the member or fails to act within 90 days after receipt of the written complaint, the complainant may present the written complaint to the Praesidium of the Synod, which consists of the President and the vice-presidents of the Synod.

(a) If after investigation the Praesidium concludes that the facts form a basis for expulsion of the member under Article XIII of the Constitution, the Praesidium shall proceed in the same fashion as hereafter required of the district president.

(b) If the Praesidium determines not to proceed, it shall in writing so inform the complainant and the involved member, which shall terminate the matter.

and be it further

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook make appropriate changes elsewhere in the Bylaws.

South Wisconsin District

12-17

To Revise Dispute Resolution Bylaws to Involve Synod President

WHEREAS, The Synod President is our Synod's chief ecclesiastical supervisor, whose duties include "supervision regarding the doctrine and the administration of" the districts and district presidents of the Synod (Constitution Art. XI B 1); and

WHEREAS, Concerns have been raised regarding the effectiveness of dealing with cases of doctrinal discipline at the district level under our current dispute resolution bylaws; therefore be it

Resolved, That the dispute resolution bylaws be revised to authorize explicitly the Synod President to call up for theological review all panel decisions related to doctrine and practice.

St. Matthew
Bonne Terre, MO

12-18

To Restore Procedure for Appeals to Expulsion Process

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's process of ecclesiastical supervision could be improved by providing a better system of checks and balances; and

WHEREAS, Since 2004, if the district president fails to proceed in a case of doctrinal supervision, the person bringing the complaint presently has no further recourse; and

WHEREAS, Our system would be improved by giving the person bringing a complaint the right to appeal a determination or decision of a district president or referral panel to the Praesidium of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to restore the procedure in ecclesiastical supervision cases that enables a complainant to appeal the case to the Praesidium of the Synod.

English District
Farmington, MI

12-19

To Restore Appeal Procedure to Expulsion Processes

WHEREAS, The 1971 LCMS convention added an appeal procedure to the Bylaws of the Synod in the event that a district president declined to proceed after allegations were received against a member of the Synod that could lead to expulsion from the Synod; and

WHEREAS, This procedure was eliminated by the 2004 convention of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Such an appeal procedure is necessary to ensure that those who raise allegations have an opportunity for a full and objective hearing; therefore be it

Resolved, That the following bylaws be added to the current Synod *Handbook* as Bylaws 2.14.6.2 and 2.17.6.2:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.14.6.2 If the district president or a Referral Panel declines to suspend the member within 90 days after receipt of the written complaint, the complainant may present the written complaint to the Praesidium of the Synod, which consists of the President and the Vice-Presidents of the Synod. If after investigation the Praesidium concludes that the facts form a basis for expulsion of the member under Article XIII of the Constitution, the Praesidium shall designate one of its members to proceed in the same fashion as hereafter required of the district president. If the Praesidium determines not to proceed, it shall in writing so inform the complainant and the involved member, which shall terminate the matter.

2.17.6.2 If the district president or a Referral Panel declines to suspend the member within 90 days after receipt of the written complaint, the complainant may present the written complaint to the Praesidium of the Synod, which consists of the President and the Vice-Presidents of the Synod. If after investigation the Praesidium concludes that the facts form a basis for expulsion of the member under Article XIII of the Constitution, the Praesidium shall designate one of its members to proceed in the same fashion as hereafter required of the district president. If the Praesidium determines not to proceed, it shall in writing so inform the complainant and the involved member, which shall terminate the matter.

Board of Directors
Southern Illinois District

12-20

To Retain Current Expulsion Procedure without Opportunity for Appeal of District President or Appeal Panel Decision

WHEREAS, The Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod define *ecclesiastical supervision* as "the responsibility, primarily of the President of the Synod and district presidents, to supervise on behalf of the Synod the doctrine, life, and administration of its members, officers, and agencies. Such supervision, subject to 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" (Bylaw 1.2.1 [i]); and

WHEREAS, The same Bylaw (1.2.1 [i]) further indicates that "those constitutional articles and bylaws pertaining to ecclesiastical supervision shall determine the full definition of ecclesiastical supervision"; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod indicates: “The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod” (Art. XI A 1); and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod defines the scope of the ecclesiastical supervision of the President of the Synod as the officers of the Synod, all such as are employed by the Synod, the individual districts of the Synod, and all district presidents (Art. XI B 1); and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the Synod defines the scope of the ecclesiastical supervision of district presidents as the ordained and commissioned ministers of their districts (Art. XII 7) and entrusts them with the power to suspend ordained and commissioned members from membership in the Synod (Art. XII 8); and

WHEREAS, The Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod limit the work of the vice-presidents of the Synod to the direction given by the President of the Synod (Constitution Art. XI C; Bylaws 3.3.1.3 [h], 3.3.2, 3.3.2.3), indicating that the constitutional authority of ecclesiastical supervision is not given to the vice-presidents or the Praesidium (President and vice-presidents of the Synod); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has viewed itself as primarily congregational in nature (Constitution Art. VII 1; Bylaw 1.3.3); and

WHEREAS, The CCM has affirmed the sole responsibility of the district presidents for ecclesiastical supervision of members in their respective districts (Opinions Ag. 1970; 13-2669); and

WHEREAS, The 2004 LCMS convention amended the Bylaws to eliminate the possibility of an accuser appealing a complaint that has been terminated by a district president to the Praesidium of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, This amendment recognized the nonhierarchical nature of the Synod and affirmed that complaints and accusations are best handled locally by those most familiar with the circumstances and individuals involved, in keeping with the constitutional authority given only to the district presidents; and

WHEREAS, Permitting an appeal of an accusation or complaint against a member of the Synod after a district president has terminated the matter undermines the ecclesiastical supervision of the district president, tends to centralize power for ecclesiastical supervision in the Praesidium of the Synod, and requires the accused to defend him- or herself twice (before the district president and the Praesidium of the Synod), placing the accused in double jeopardy; and

WHEREAS, The necessity of the accused potentially having to defend more than once costs an immense amount of time, energy, emotion, and money—resources that are best expended upon ministry needs; and

WHEREAS, Misuse of an appeal by an accuser to the Praesidium of the Synod at best might be described as mischief and at worst described as harassment, defaming the good name of a member of the Synod and bearing false witness; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention be memorialized to decline any overtures to amend the system of ecclesiastical supervision of the Synod, especially any overture to allow an appeal after a district president has terminated a matter involving a member of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention reaffirm the method of ecclesiastical supervision adopted in the Bylaw changes by the 2004 convention.

Trinity, Utica, MI; Immanuel, Grand Rapids, MI; Marco, Marco Island, FL; King of Kings, Omaha, NE; Amazing Grace, Oxford, FL; Gloria Dei, Houston, TX; Board of Directors, Southeastern District; California-Nevada-Hawaii District; Board of Directors, Michigan District; St. Luke, Haslett, MI; Pacific Southwest District; St. John, Dublin,

OH; Village, Bronxville, NY; First Trinity, Tonawanda, NY; Salem, Tomball, TX; Salem, Buffalo, NY; Board of Directors, Texas District; Messiah, Lincoln, NE; Prince of Peace, Orlando FL; King of Kings, Round Rock, TX; The Rock, Seward, NE; Trinity, Delray Beach, FL; Christ, Mantua OH

12-21

To Reaffirm Commitment to Current System of Ecclesiastical Supervision

WHEREAS, Bylaw 1.2.1 (i) defines: “*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. 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 2.13.2). Further, those constitutional articles and bylaws pertaining to ecclesiastical supervision shall determine the full definition of ecclesiastical supervision”; and

WHEREAS, Constitution Art. XI B 1 defines the scope of ecclesiastical supervision of the President of the Synod: “The President has the supervision regarding the doctrine and the administration of (a) All officers of the Synod; (b) All such as are employed by the Synod; (c) The individual districts of the Synod; and (d) All district presidents”; and

WHEREAS, Article XII 7, 8 defines the scope of ecclesiastical supervision of the district presidents of the Synod. Article XII 7 states: “The district presidents shall, moreover, especially exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the ordained and commissioned ministers of their district and acquaint themselves with the religious conditions of the congregations of their district. To this end they shall visit and, according as they deem it necessary, hold investigations in the congregations. Their assistants in this work are the circuit visitors, who therefore shall regularly make their reports to the district president.” According to Article XII 8, “district presidents are empowered to suspend from membership ordained and commissioned ministers for persistently adhering to false doctrine or for having given offense by an ungodly life, in accordance with such procedure as shall be set forth in the Bylaws of the Synod”; and

WHEREAS, The Synod’s CCM has affirmed the sole responsibility of the district presidents for ecclesiastical supervision of members in their respective districts (CCM Opinions Ag. 1970; 13-2669); and

WHEREAS, The 2004 Synod convention affirmed the sole responsibility of the district president for ecclesiastical supervision when it amended the Synod Bylaws so that an accuser cannot appeal a complaint terminated by a district president to the Praesidium of the Synod (President and vice-presidents of the Synod); and

WHEREAS, This amendment testified to the Synod’s support for the constitutional authority given to district presidents alone in the ecclesiastical supervision of a member of their district; and

WHEREAS, The district president is in closer proximity to the contexts of the situations he supervises; and

WHEREAS, The current structure of ecclesiastical supervision protects a defendant from the double jeopardy of having to defend himself/herself against an accuser before the district president and then before the President of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention be memorialized to decline any overtures to amend the system of ecclesiastical supervision of the Synod, especially any overture to allow an appeal after a district president has terminated a matter involving a member of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention reaffirm its commitment to the current system of ecclesiastical supervision.

Board of Directors, Northwest District; Board of Directors, Florida-Georgia District; Orlando West Circuit, Florida-Georgia District; Board of Directors, New Jersey District

12-22

To Clarify Proper Use of Social Media and Internet Postings by Church Leadership during Expulsion Process

WHEREAS, LCMS Bylaw 2.14 provides a process for commencing and hearing an action regarding expulsion of congregations and individuals from membership in the Synod, and this process is further explained in the *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* associated with Bylaw 2.14; and

WHEREAS, The Eighth Commandment and Matthew 18 provide the foundation for Synod procedures established in the Bylaw 2.14 process, as explained in the *SOPM* (*SOPM* I F); and

WHEREAS, The *SOPM* provides that the reputation of the accused and accuser are to be protected during the Bylaw 2.14 process (*SOPM* I F; II G); and

WHEREAS, The *SOPM* provides that all parties and other participants in the Bylaw 2.14 process, including ecclesiastical supervisors, agree to keep confidential all communications that take place during the process, with certain limited exceptions (*SOPM* II P); and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14 and its *SOPM* provide that those involved in the expulsion process should avoid undue publicity (Bylaw 2.14.7.8 [g]; *SOPM* II P; I N); and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14 and its *SOPM* define *publicity* as “any information or action, whether written, oral, or visual, that brings a person, cause, or an alleged accusation to public notice” (Bylaw 2.14.2 [p] and *SOPM* II C [p]); and

WHEREAS, Blogs and websites, including but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and similar social media and Internet websites or applications, are by nature public platforms; and

WHEREAS, Comments, statements, or opinions made on blogs or social media websites or applications by church leaders regarding pending Bylaw 2.14 matters may unduly or inadvertently influence or impact the reputation of the accuser and the accused and the confidentiality of the process, or create undue publicity, or otherwise inappropriately affect the Bylaw 2.14 process; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14 and its *SOPM* provide that any member of the Synod involved in the Bylaw 2.14 procedure who intentionally and materially violates any of its requirements is subject to disciplinary measures, specifically noting that the violation of the prohibition against publicity while a matter is still undecided or while an appeal is contemplated or pending is a violation subject to disciplinary measures (Bylaw 2.14.10.2; *SOPM* II W); therefore be it

Resolved, That church leadership should refrain from blog, social media, or Internet posts which contradict the provisions of Bylaw 2.14 and its *SOPM* regarding reputations, confidentiality, and publicity; and be it further

Resolved, That *publicity* as defined in Bylaw 2.14 (p) and the *SOPM* should include the use of blogs and websites, including but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and similar social media and Internet websites or applications; and be it further

Resolved, That blogs, social media, or Internet postings should not be used by church leadership to comment on pending matters under Bylaw 2.14 or *SOPM* Parts I and II; and be it further

Resolved, That any member of the Synod involved in a Bylaw 2.14 procedure, particularly while the matter is still undecided or while an appeal is contemplated or pending, who intentionally and materially violates the prohibition on blog, social media, or other Internet posts is subject to ecclesiastical discipline; and be it further

Resolved, That church leadership may otherwise make blog, social media, or Internet posts not in conflict with the Holy Scriptures; the Lutheran Confessions; the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod; and the *SOPM*; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod should create and establish a comprehensive social media and Internet policy for church leadership.

Board of Directors, Northwest District; Board of Directors, Florida-Georgia District

12-23

To Support Proper Ecclesiastical Supervision in Synod Districts

WHEREAS, In a recent case, charges of false doctrine against the accused party, who is a professor of theology at a private Lutheran university and a long-standing and vocal critic of the public doctrine of the LCMS, were dismissed; and

WHEREAS, His ecclesiastical supervisor—that is, his district president—was responsible for this dismissal because he refused to initiate formal proceedings but instead referred the case to a Referral Panel (Bylaw 2.14.5) that dismissed it; and

WHEREAS, Serious doctrinal charges need to be heard by the proper adjudicatory authorities; that is, in this case, the Hearing Panel (Bylaw 2.15.7); and

WHEREAS, The most important work of a district president is to see that the doctrine of the Synod, as described in Article II of its Constitution, is upheld by all rostered church workers under his supervision; and

WHEREAS, A district is the Synod in that place, thus making a district president an officer of the Synod, who is thus accountable to the national convention and its officers; and

WHEREAS, This recent action requires the President of the Synod to report such cases to the Synod (Constitution Art. XI B 2), but neither the Constitution nor the Bylaws provide a specific means by which it can be addressed and resolved other than by expulsion from the Synod (Bylaw section 2.15); therefore be it

Resolved, When a district president fails to act according to the Synod’s Constitution and Bylaws, and refuses to heed the admonishment of the President of the Synod to act according to the Synod’s Constitution and Bylaws, that the President of the Synod will report such cases to the Synod in its national convention, with all significant details in written documentation for the delegates, giving them sufficient time to review the matter; and be it further

Resolved, That unless the national convention resolves to terminate the matter by a simple majority vote, after that national convention has adjourned the President of the Synod will proceed with discipline toward that district president by proceeding with the provisions of section 2.15 of the Bylaws; and be it further

Resolved, That such action only entails removal from office for failure and refusal to act according to the duties of office, not expulsion from the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That if the convention decides to terminate the matter, then the matter cannot be reviewed or appealed on the basis of the same action—or failure to act—of that district president; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Bylaws of the Synod be amended accordingly by the Commission on Handbook to include this adjudicative process.

Holy Cross, Albany, OR; Trinity, Evansville, IN; Christ, Trego WI

12-24

To Restore Right of Appeal to Disciplinary Proceedings

WHEREAS, Termination or suspension of membership in the Synod is a serious matter involving both the doctrine and life of members, and should be taken only as a final step, following advice, counsel, encouragement, and, when necessary, admonition regarding teaching and/or practice; and

WHEREAS, Consistent with basic principles of fairness and due process, we should avoid the example of those in Acts 6:11 who “secretly instigated men who said, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God,’” but instead, in accordance with scriptural guidance on rebuking one’s brother, give any member who is subject to discipline access to all materials that are to be relied upon by the Dispute Resolution Panel, district president, or other adjudicatory body in considering the charges; and

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaws provide for the further protection of members by including provisions for challenging the decisions of ecclesiastical supervisors in these matters, and for substituting another district officer where the district president has a conflict of interest, as well as provisions for restoration of membership that has been suspended or terminated; and

WHEREAS, Prior to the 2004 Synod convention, there also existed a right of appeal to the LCMS Praesidium in matters of ecclesial supervision involving such serious disciplinary action, under former Bylaw 2.27.2 (b); and

WHEREAS, In order to ensure fair and consistent treatment of all members of the Synod in a Christian and fraternal manner, and to ensure prompt resolution of disputes for the best interests of all concerned, it is appropriate that this right of appeal be restored and granted to all parties; therefore be it

Resolved, That any member of the Synod subject to disciplinary action shall have the right to a copy of all materials relied upon by the Dispute Resolution Panel, district president, or other adjudicatory body considering such charges, and that the Commission on Handbook modify relevant bylaws accordingly; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod add the following bylaw paragraph to Bylaw 2.14 where appropriate, along with any corresponding changes required to other bylaws to avoid conflicts therewith:

PROPOSED WORDING

In cases seeking expulsion or suspension of a member from the Synod,

the complainant or the involved member shall have the right (a) within 30 days following the decision of the district president to appeal such decision, or (b) if no decision has been issued by the district president within 90 days following the filing of the initial complaint, to have such matter finally adjudicated, in either case by presenting the written complaint, responses, and decision (if any) to the Praesidium of the Synod, which consists of the President and the vice-presidents of the Synod. If after investigation the Praesidium concludes that the facts form a basis for expulsion or suspension of the member, the Praesidium shall proceed in the same fashion as hereafter required of the district president. If the Praesidium concludes that the facts do not form a basis for expulsion or suspension, it shall in writing so inform the complainant and the involved member, which shall terminate the matter.

Pastors Conference
Southern Illinois District

12-25

To Provide Bylaw Provisions for Appeals by Accusers in Expulsion Processes

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 2.14.5.2 states that if a district president or a Referral Panel determines not to initiate formal proceedings concerning an accusation that could lead to expulsion of a congregation or individual from the membership of Synod under Article XIII of the Constitution of Synod, such determination “shall terminate the matter”; and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws of the Synod do not allow for the accuser in matters of potential expulsion of members of the Synod to appeal decisions made by district presidents or Referral Panels; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Commission on Constitutional Matters together with the Commission on Handbook and two representatives of the Council of Presidents, one being chosen by the Chairman of the Council of Presidents and one being chosen by the President of the Synod, be formed as a committee to draft revisions to the Bylaws of the Synod making provisions for the accuser in matters of potential expulsion of members of the Synod to appeal decisions of district presidents or Referral Panels and present these revisions to the 2019 LCMS convention for consideration.

South Dakota District

12-26

To Form a Task Force to Study the Expulsion Process for Public Teaching of False Doctrine

WHEREAS, Member congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod should be able to call any rostered member of Synod with the confidence that he or she will perform duties in accord with the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, Luther writes, “God’s people or holy Christians are recognized by the office of the keys exercised publicly. That is, as Christ decrees in Matthew 18, if a Christian sins, he should be reproved; and if he does not mend his ways, he should be bound in his sin and cast out” (AE 41:153); and

WHEREAS, LCMS President Matthew Harrison has made the following statement:

When a public teacher on the roster of Synod can without consequence publicly advocate the ordination of women (even participate vested in the installation of an ELCA clergy person), homosexuality, the errancy of the Bible, the historical-critical method, open communion, commu-

nion with the Reformed, evolution, and more, then the public confession of the Synod is meaningless. I am saying that if my Synod does not change its inability to call such a person to repentance and remove such a teacher where there is no repentance, then we are liars and our confession is meaningless. I do not want to belong to such a synod, much less lead it. I have no intention of walking away from my vocation. I shall rather use it and, by the grace of God, use all the energy I have to call this Synod to fidelity to correct this situation. (<http://wmltblog.org/2015/01/regarding-a-recent-decision-of-a-panel-not-to-proceed-with-charges-regarding-a-public-false-teacher-in-the-lcms>); and

WHEREAS, Article III, Objectives, of the Constitution of the LCMS says,

“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”;

therefore be it

Resolved, That the Central Illinois District of the LCMS memorialize the 2016 Synod convention to direct the President of the Synod to appoint a task force. This task force may be comprised of one professor from each seminary, two district presidents, one parish pastor, one commissioned minister, and three laypersons (at least one of whom shall be an attorney) to study this problem; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force formed by the 2016 Synod convention report back to the 2019 convention with recommended changes to the dispute resolution procedures that allow for clear biblical and confessional standards to deal in Christian love with those who openly teach contrary to Article II of the LCMS Constitution.

Central Illinois District

12-27

To Allow for Review of Acquittals

WHEREAS, Bylaws 2.14 through 2.15 are ineffective at expelling open and manifest heretics from the roster of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, This has caused great scandal for the church, its member congregations and their members, and the Synodical Union; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention is the supreme authority in our union; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod memorialize the 2016 Synod convention to amend the Synod’s Constitution as follows:

PROPOSED WORDING

Article XIII Expulsion from the Synod

1. Members who act contrary to the confession laid down in Article II and to the conditions of membership laid down in Article VI or persist in an offensive conduct, shall, after previous futile admonition, be expelled from the Synod.
2. Expulsion shall be executed only after following such procedure as shall be set forth in the Bylaws of the Synod.
3. After the procedure set forth in the Bylaws of Synod has been followed, the Praesidium of the Synod shall review those cases in which one accused of the teaching of false doctrine was not expelled from Synod. If they find legitimate cause for expulsion, the Praesidium of the Synod should bring the case before the Synod for adjudication at its next regular convention.
4. If the member expelled is a pastor or teacher in a congregation of the Synod, such congregation, unless it has already done so, is held to depose him from office and to deal with him in accordance with the Word of God, notwithstanding an appeal. If it persistently refuses

to do so, the respective district is to deal with it. If all negotiations and admonitions fail of their purpose, such congregation forfeits its membership in the Synod.

5. Because of their expulsion those so expelled forfeit their membership and all share in the property of the Synod. The latter holds good also with respect to those who for any reason themselves sever their connection with the Synod.

Montana District

12-28

To Create a Commission on Doctrinal Fidelity

WHEREAS, Article II of the Constitution of the LCMS defines the required confessional subscription of her members; and

WHEREAS, Article VI of the Constitution provides the Conditions of Membership stating, among other things, that all who seek membership must accept the confessional basis of Article II and renounce “unionism and syncretism of every description, such as:

- a. Serving congregations of mixed confession, as such, by ministers of the church;
- 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, ... ” and also submit to “[e]xclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymn-books, and catechisms in church and school”;

and

WHEREAS, These articles do not speak to the common sins of the sheepfold, but to the pernicious teaching of false doctrine or unionistic support of heterodoxy by under-shepherds; and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture teaches that we are to restore an erring brother (Gal. 6:1) so that we may agree with one another and live in peace (2 Cor. 13:11). Scripture also reminds us to be watchful lest we also be tempted (Gal. 6:1), and it clearly teaches that we are to avoid and separate from those who, after being warned, continue to teach false doctrine or cause division (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10); and

WHEREAS, Article XIII addresses the expulsion from the Synod of those who act or teach contrary to Article II and who violate the conditions of membership as provided in Article VI or persist in offensive conduct; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw section 2.14 addresses specific procedures for expulsion from Synod of congregations and individuals; and

WHEREAS, Historical precedent has shown that Bylaw 2.14 is routinely ignored regarding complaints against individuals and congregations who are accused of violating Article II and/or Article VI, such complaints languishing without action by the appropriate ecclesiastical supervisor; and

WHEREAS, Inaction or bureaucratic delay in matters concerning the open and public violation of Article II and Article VI standards bring shame upon the LCMS by supporting the claim of heterodoxy against her, create confusion within the church at large by placing stumbling blocks before her members, question the validity of our walking together as a Synod, cause dissension and schism within the Synod, open doors for others to denigrate and blaspheme the Synod, and most important, open the claim that we as a church body denigrate and blaspheme the Word of God; and

WHEREAS, Such bureaucratic delay is made even worse by the present dispute resolution process, which adds to God’s Word by requiring a face-to-face meeting between the accuser(s) and the accused for public offenses. This requirement is contrary to the conduct of Christ who publicly rebuked the Pharisees in their absence (Matt. 23) and to Luther’s understanding of the Eighth Commandment

regarding public sin (LC I 284). Moreover, such contradiction is verified by Bylaw 1.10.1.2 of the 2007 Synod *Handbook*; therefore be it

Resolved, That in the case of violations of Article II and Article VI, all requirements for a face-to-face meeting be repealed on the basis of Scripture and Luther's Large Catechism; and be it further

Resolved, That all complaints against Article II or Article VI violations which have not been resolved by the present dispute resolution process within 180 days from the original complaint to the respective district president be heard and resolved by an independent Commission on Doctrinal Fidelity appointed by the President of the Synod, comprised of five members: one district president, two ordained clergy, and two lay persons—each known for their fidelity to the teachings of Holy Scripture and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; and be it finally

Resolved, That the decision of the Commission on Doctrinal Fidelity may be appealed to the Appeal Panel (2.14.8), whose findings are to be sent to the Final Hearing Panel (2.14.9).

Grace, Paris, TX; Holy Cross, Albany, OR

12-29

To Expand Training of Peacemakers

WHEREAS, Scripture (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3–6; John 17:22–23) calls for us to walk together in faith, peace, and unity; and

WHEREAS, We are yet sinners and at times find ourselves in conflict with one another; and

WHEREAS, Such conflict is detrimental to our witness, our unity, and our work together in the Kingdom; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 1.10.10 established four district reconcilers per district to implement the formal dispute resolution process, as well as serving as peacemakers in the early, often crucial, informal stages of the process; and

WHEREAS, The duties of circuit visitors outlined in Bylaw 5.2.3 include strengthening “the spirit of cooperation among pastors, commissioned ministers, and congregations” and, when, requested to do so by the district president, serving “as a mediator to effect reconciliation of disputes within the circuit not under the dispute resolution” process; and

WHEREAS, As a result of the above, circuit visitors often find themselves working alone in difficult situations calling for peacemaking skills for which they have received little training; and

WHEREAS, Difficult situations calling for peacemaking skills are often better addressed early on by a team approach of a circuit visitor working with a trained peacemaker; and

WHEREAS, Each district can be better served with the forming of a team of trained peacemakers to assist the four district reconcilers as well as the circuit visitors; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 Synod convention affirm the importance and witness of Christian peacemaking and the blessed work of district reconcilers and circuit visitors in their peacemaking roles; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention encourage circuit visitors to take advantage of the opportunity provided in Bylaw 5.2.1(c) to seek out and appoint volunteer circuit peacemakers to work alongside them in this difficult work; and be it finally

Resolved, That the appropriate Synod agency be directed to develop and administer through the district reconcilers a training

program specifically directed toward circuit visitors and circuit peacemakers adequately to prepare them for this important work.

Board of Directors, Southeastern District; Florida-Georgia District

12-30

To Provide Assistance to Lay Reconcilers Serving on Dispute Resolution, Hearing, and Final Hearing Panels

Rationale

2013 Res. 7-18 “To Study Doctrinal Training for Reconcilers” responded to a request in Part 2 of the Synod President’s Report “to consider doctrinal training for reconcilers” to assist them when they are asked to serve on panels that are called upon to decide matters of doctrine or doctrinal application. The resolution’s single resolve paragraph referred this request to the Council of Presidents, the Commission on Constitutional Matters, and the Secretary of the Synod “for appropriate study and recommendations giving particular attention to Bylaw 2.14.7, especially 2.14.7.8 (k).”

After discussions during the current triennium that included the COP and CCM as well as the Commission on Handbook and the reconcilers themselves during late-2014 regional training meetings, it was generally agreed that providing such comprehensive doctrinal training for lay reconcilers as would be necessary to cover all potential doctrinal issues would not be a reasonable solution.

The bylaws governing dispute resolution and suspension/expulsion processes already contain resource assistance to the parties to a dispute to help them understand and apply our Synod’s confessional Lutheran doctrines and practices (Bylaws 1.10.18.1 [h]; 2.14.7.8 [l]). The same resource opportunity is available to a Dispute Resolution, Hearing, or Final Hearing Panel as a whole (Bylaws 1.10.18.1 [h]; 2.14.7.8 [l]). In the interest of providing lay reconciler panel members with a resource for personal assistance (i.e., to talk through a doctrinal matter with a knowledgeable person), the addition of a subparagraph (3) to Bylaw 1.10.18.1 [h] and a subparagraph (5) to paragraph (l) of Bylaw 2.14.7.8, as follows, will provide such opportunity.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the following bylaw changes be adopted by the 2016 convention of the Synod to offer ready access to resources that may assist lay panel members in understanding confessional Lutheran doctrines and doctrinal applications.

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

1.10.18.1 ... (h) If any part of the dispute involves a specific question of doctrine or doctrinal application, ...

(3) An individual member of the panel may also request resource materials and personal assistance from the executive director of the CTCR or from a theologian recommended by the executive director, this to provide opportunity to read about, discuss with a knowledgeable person, and better comprehend doctrinal matters associated with the dispute. The dispute resolution case itself shall not be discussed.

2.14.7.8 ... (l) If any part of the dispute involves a specific question of doctrine or doctrinal application, ...

(5) The lay reconciler member of the panel may also request resource materials and personal assistance from the executive director of the CTCR or from a theologian recommended by the executive

director, this to provide opportunity to read about, discuss with a knowledgeable person, and better comprehend doctrinal matters associated with the suspension. The suspension case itself shall not be discussed.

Commission on Constitutional Matters

12-31

To Clarify Ecclesiastical Supervision of Rostered Workers Serving Outside Home District

WHEREAS, For the sake of harmony and unity, it is desirable that proper ecclesiastical supervision be provided for all rostered workers of the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Indiana District in convention petition the 2016 LCMS convention to clarify the ecclesiastical supervision of rostered workers (ordained and commissioned) who are serving in areas outside the geographical district in which they hold membership.

Indiana District

12-32

To Address Unbiblical Removal of Pastors from Office

WHEREAS, The pastoral office is a divinely mandated office (and not the creation of man) for the express purpose of creating and sustaining faith through God's appointed means (Matt. 18:19, 20; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 4:1, 2; 12:28; Eph. 4:11–16; 2 Tim. 2:2; Heb. 13:17; AC IV, V, XIV); and

WHEREAS, Such faith is nothing other than the working of the Holy Spirit in and through the divinely appointed means to pronounce forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake (John 20:23; Matt. 16:19; AC XXVIII 21, 22); and

WHEREAS, This Office of the Holy Ministry is established by Christ for the good of His Church, those whom He has called into this office are likewise removed by our Lord, mediately through His Church, not based upon the sinful whims of man but only for the biblical reasons of (1) false doctrine, (2) immoral life, or (3) inability to fulfill the pastoral office (1 Tim. 1:8–11; 3:1–7; 4:12–16; Titus 1:5–9); and

WHEREAS, Implicit in the fact that it is a divinely established office is also that the call into this office is permanent, not temporary nor to be entered into based upon some contractual agreement rather than a divine call extended through the Church; and

WHEREAS, The permanency of the pastoral office has always been upheld by the Evangelical Lutheran Church until recent times, as was well documented in a response to the CTCR's February 2004 study document titled "Theology and Practice of 'the Divine Call'" by two minority opinions written by two members of the CTCR. In their taking the CTCR to task, Kurt Marquart and Walter Lehenbauer stated the following regarding the Synod's historical understanding of the call, especially as it relates to the idea of "temporary calls."

1992 Resolution 3-09A mandating the study of the Call expressly stated that this was to be done "utilizing the writings of C. F. W. Walther (i.e., his book *Church and Ministry* and essay 'The Congregation's Rights [sic] to Choose Its Pastor'" (1992 *Proceedings*, 116). The intent clearly was to take seriously the balanced, historic, orthodox Lutheran consensus on church and ministry, for the clear exposition and defense of which Walther is rightly famous. The CTCR's document fails to do justice to standard Lutheranism's rejection of "temporary calls," as the following citations clearly show.

"God nowhere has granted or permitted those who call the right to make such a contract. Hence, neither the one calling nor the one who is called may regard such a call or dismissal as divine" (C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, trans. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 311., *Theologia positivopolemica*, part II, p. 530).

Neither is a congregation entitled to issue such a call [i.e., temporary], nor is a preacher authorized to accept it. Such a call is before God neither valid nor legitimate. It is an abuse [Unsitte]. It conflicts in the first place with the divinity, clearly certified in God's Word, of a true call into a preaching office in the church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28; Ps. 68:12; Is. 41:27). ... Such a call is not at all that which God has ordained in respect of the holy office of preaching, but is an entirely different matter, which hasn't got anything to do with it. For it is no mediate call through the church, but a human contract; it is no life's calling, but a passing function outside the divine order; an ecclesiastical, thus a human order, or rather an abominable disorder made contrary to the order of God. It is therefore, as stated before, without any validity, null and void, and one so called is not to be regarded as a servant of Christ and of the church. ... A shepherd and cowherd people may hire for a time, and when their service no longer pleases, they may at a definite time, but not always, dismiss them, if they wish: but so to treat a shepherd of souls is not within the power of any man. Nor may the servant of the Word himself accept the holy office in such a way, unless he wants to become a hireling. [C. F. W. Walther, *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie* [*American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*], 4th ed., 1897, 41–45.]

This temporary calling is a shameful perversion of the order which Christ Himself has created in the church. Nowhere is it revealed as the will of God that preachers and teachers should be so engaged that it depends on the good will and the decision of the others whether they may remain in their office or not. [J. P. Beyer, "Vom Beruf zum Amt der Kirchendiener," LCMS Eastern District *Proceedings*, (1889) 36–37.]

From the beginning our Synod had to take a definite stand on this question. Among the conditions of membership in Synod the following is listed [in the Constitution]: "Regular (not temporary) call of the pastor." Chapter V, paragraph 11, we find this statement: "Licenses to preach which are customary in this country are not granted by Synod because they are contrary to Scripture and the practice of the Church." ... This has been the consistent practice of our Synod since that time and has been stated again and again in official papers presented at conventions and in our periodicals. [P. F. Koehnke, "The Call into the Holy Ministry," in *The Abiding Word* (St. Louis: CPH, 1946) 1:380]

The call is always permanent. The notion of a temporary call is inconceivable in the nature of the case, and therefore the matter is not even considered by Luther or the Confessions or any Lutheran theologian. ... As the immediate call in apostolic times was for life (until God Himself called the person to a new place), so it is with the mediate call. It is permanent and irrevocable, unless God Himself intervenes. [Robert D. Preus, "The Doctrine of the Call in the Confessions and Lutheran Orthodoxy," in *Church and Ministry Today*, ed. John A. Maxfield (Crestwood, MO.: Luther Academy, 2001), 33.];

and

WHEREAS, The departure from faithful practice in upholding the pastoral office and the divine right of a congregation to maintain that office is evidenced in a myriad of ways today within the LCMS, including, but not restricted to the following:

- Congregations firing pastors for no biblical cause and without due process;
- Congregations deposing pastors without cause and due process claiming that the pastor is "an employee at will" and the congregation is autonomous;
- A district president places a pastor who is in office or who has been deposed from office, either rightfully or wrongfully, on a so-called "restricted status." If this is done prior to due process ... , it is per se a violation of the minister's call according to AC XIV (Order in the Church) or of his right to receive a call ... ;
- A district president controlling the call list of a congregation. This is clear violation of the right of the congregation to have a decisive role

in the call of the whole Church, which was the concern of Luther, the Confessions, and all previous dogmaticians;

- A district president or circuit counselor interfering in the ministry of a pastor by talking with members and hearing complaints against him without his knowledge or presence. This action, whether purposeful or accidental, is a violation of due process and of the minister's call;
- The issuing of a "temporary call" by a congregation either at the bequest of the district or on its own;

and

WHEREAS, The number of pastors who have been unbiblically removed by their congregation and or district president is growing, even though specifics are often almost impossible to give due to the fact that the parties involved are reticent to go on record in fear of being permanently banned from receiving a call; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention call all Synod and district presidents and officials and all pastors and congregations to uphold the divinely ordained pastoral office by no longer dismissing pastors without cause; and be it further

Resolved, That district presidents give priority to men who have been unbiblically removed when suggesting names to congregations calling a pastor, even including them with the list of candidates from the seminaries who receive calls through the placement process; and be it further

Resolved, That, where district officials interfere in the office of pastor in a given congregation and encourage members to do likewise, they be admonished to desist in such activity and seek the pastor's and congregation's forgiveness; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention move to correct all such ungodly activity and through proper catechesis at the local and Synod level that the Church at large recognize the gift of the pastoral office to the Church by her Bridegroom, even her Lord Jesus Christ—all in faithfulness to His words to her in Matthew 28:18–20.

Zion
Chippewa Falls, WI

12-33

To Require District Presidents to Provide Church Worker Information When Requested

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has a congregation-Synod polity in which the individual congregation's right of self-government is protected by Article VII of the Synod's Constitution; and

WHEREAS, One of the most important rights of congregations is their authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers of the church (see Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 66–67); and

WHEREAS, Both Martin Luther and C. F. W. Walther asserted that a bishop, superintendent, or district president "should confirm the one whom the congregation chose and called; if he does not do it, he [the elected man] is confirmed anyway by virtue of the congregation's call," thus proving that the right of calling and electing rests with the congregation and is not shared with the district president (see Luther's Works AE 39:312 [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970] and C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Office* [Saint Louis: CPH, 2012], p. 217); and

WHEREAS, The calling and electing authority of the congregation does not exclude the seeking of counsel from the respective district president (LCMS Bylaw 2.5.1; Walther, *Church and Office*, p. 215, quoting Treatise, 14), but such counsel cannot infringe on the rights of the congregation to choose its own church worker within

the parameters set by the Constitution (Art. VI 3) and the Bylaws (2.5.2); and

WHEREAS, In the past triennium, at least one district president has infringed on the rights of the congregations in his district by refusing to give them information about church workers whom they were considering for a call, resulting in severe prejudice against such church workers; therefore be it

Resolved, That all district presidents shall deliver to calling congregations or schools on a timely basis the information that they request about church workers, such as their Pastor Information Form (PIF) and Self Evaluation Tool (SET); and be it further

Resolved, That when calling congregations or schools discover that their district president has refused to cooperate with them in the calling process, they are encouraged to consult with the Secretary of the Synod, their regional vice-president, and/or the President of the Synod, so that their needs may be met in the calling process and their rights as a Christian and Lutheran congregation be maintained.

Holy Cross, Albany, OR; Christ, Trego, WI

12-34

To Improve Transparency of Council of Presidents Procedures and Meetings

WHEREAS, The Council of Presidents is directed by Bylaw 3.10.1.2 to counsel with one another on matters regarding the doctrine and administration of the Synod, its regions, and its districts, and to edify and support one another in the work they share; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has also entrusted significant additional responsibilities to the Council of Presidents, including matters of adjudication, candidate placement, and roster status; and

WHEREAS, The Council of Presidents currently maintains a handbook of procedures that assists it in its work; and

WHEREAS, The handbook of procedures is not currently a public document, even though it and the related activities of the Council of Presidents relating to church workers have significant impact on every member of the Synod (both called church workers and the congregations they serve); and

WHEREAS, Similar procedural documents used by districts of the Synod and by circuit visitors are not uniformly available; and

WHEREAS, It is right that the work of God's kingdom be done with openness toward all, to enable rostered members of the Synod to understand the standards and procedures by which they are to be measured and judged, and to enable congregations to understand the processes by which they are to walk together; and

WHEREAS, God's Word says in 2 Corinthians 6:11–12, "We have spoken freely to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections"; and

WHEREAS, Insofar as Christian love permits, it is right that the processes of the Synod and its districts be made known to those to whom they apply; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Council of Presidents' handbook of procedures and any similar procedural documents now or hereafter in use for the general administration or governance of the Council of Presidents, each district, and circuit visitors be provided to the Commission on Handbook to be made publicly available; and be it further

Resolved, That the minutes of each meeting of the Council of Presidents, redacted only as privacy requires for matters relating to specific persons, be provided to the Secretary of the Synod no later than the conclusion of the next regular meeting of the Council of

Presidents, to be made available upon request to any member of the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook modify relevant bylaws accordingly.

Pastors Conference
Northern Illinois District

12-35

To Permit Access by Rostered Workers to Own Personnel Records

WHEREAS, Districts of the Synod maintain personnel records on rostered workers; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of record keeping is to benefit the church as a whole and to ensure that all things are done decently and in order; and

WHEREAS, It is appropriate that rostered workers be able to review their personnel records to ensure that they are accurate and up to date; therefore be it

Resolved, That all rostered workers of the Synod shall have the right from time to time and upon reasonable advanced notice to inspect their personnel records maintained by the district within which they have or last had a call; and be it further

Resolved, That if any rostered worker disputes information therein contained and is unable to resolve such dispute by fraternal consultation within 60 days after request to the district maintaining the records, then as his or her sole remedy he or she may institute a dispute resolution complaint against the district president of such district with respect thereto; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Commission on Handbook modify relevant bylaws accordingly.

Pastors Conference
Northern Illinois District

12-36

To Prioritize District Presidents' Work to within Their Districts

WHEREAS, Synod Constitution Art. XII 7 states, "The district presidents shall, moreover, especially exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the ordained and commissioned ministers of their district and acquaint themselves with the religious conditions of the congregations of their district. To this end they shall visit and, according as they deem it necessary, hold investigations in the congregations. Their assistants in this work are the circuit visitors, who therefore shall regularly make their reports to the district president"; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, the Synod has focused upon "visitation"; and

WHEREAS, The district president is required by the bylaws of Synod to make visitations a priority (Bylaw 4.4.4); and

WHEREAS, The district president is also required to focus on his district (Bylaws 4.4.5, 4.4.6, and 4.4.7); and

WHEREAS, These duties require the district president to be active in his district in both visitation and supervision; therefore be it

Resolved, That district presidents be required to spend at least 85 percent of their workdays working on district matters normally from within their districts; and be it further

Resolved, That a district president in violation of this requirement be given opportunity to meet this requirement; and be it finally

Resolved, That a district president who continues to violate this requirement be removed from his office.

Our Savior
Cheyenne, WY

12-37

To Require District President Visitation of Congregations

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has since its founding required regular visitation of congregations; and

WHEREAS, The president, district presidents, and circuit visitors are appointed primarily for this purpose; and

WHEREAS, 2013 Res. 7-01A laid out the history and importance of visitation in the church, beginning with the apostolic example and continuing through the Reformation to our present day; and

WHEREAS, Res. 7-01A references Bylaw 4.4.4 (a), which requires that district presidents visit or cause to be visited each congregation in the district every three years, and also laments that visitation "has been irregular throughout our Synod"; and

WHEREAS, The district president is an officer of the Synod, bound to carry out the bylaws of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Refusal to fulfill the bylaws of the Synod is cause for removal from office; and

WHEREAS, Removal from office is a difficult and lengthy process; and

WHEREAS, If a Synod officer refuses to fulfill his bylaw duties, including and especially the duty of visitation, he has shown himself unqualified to serve as an officer of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 4.4.4, 4.7.1, and 2.11.1 be amended by the addition of the following bylaws:

PROPOSED WORDING

4.4.4 The district president shall, in accordance with the Constitution of the Synod, in his ministry of ecclesiastical supervision visit the congregations of the district.

...

(g) The district president will report to the secretary of the district, at least four months prior to the opening of the district convention, those congregations which have been visited by him or his representative, and any congregations which have not been visited.

(h) Upon receipt of this list, the district secretary shall include in the Workbook of the district convention a list of each congregation in the district, and its status in regard to visitation. Congregations and officers of the district will be given 30 days to dispute that status, after which the list will be considered certified.

(i) Congregations visited after this deadline will be added to the list of visited congregations by the secretary of the district, upon receipt of written proof of such visitation, signed by the district president or his representative, and two officers of the congregation in question.

(j) In the event of disputes regarding the status of congregational visitation, the facts shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary of the Synod by both sides in the dispute. A majority vote of the President of the Synod, the Secretary of the Synod, and a vice-president of the Synod, to be chosen by blind draw, will decide each case. Such decision will be final.

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.

(a) District presidents who, by the opening of the district convention, have not visited or caused to be visited at least 90 percent of the member congregations in their district each triennium will be automatically disqualified from being elected to any district or Synod office for a period of six years.

(b) District presidents who do not visit or cause to be visited a congregation of their district for two successive triennia for any reason other than the congregation's refusal to receive the district president or his representative, will automatically be disqualified from being elected to any district or Synod office for a period of six years.

2.11.1 To remain on the roster of the Synod as an active member, an ordained or commissioned minister of religion must be a communicant member of a congregation which is a member of the Synod (except as provided in paragraph [c] below) and be regularly performing the duties of one of the following:

...

(l) District presidents disqualified under bylaw 4.7.1 (a) or 4.7.1 (b) from continued service as district president, shall during the same period, also be ineligible for any positions under Bylaws 2.11.1 (d)–(k), or any appointed Synod or district office. Such disqualification shall have no effect on the emeritus status of the individual.

Trinity
Wheatland, WY

12-38

To Call to Faithful Confession

WHEREAS, We are taught to pray that the devil may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief; and

WHEREAS, Scripture clearly teaches that creation came into being by the Word of God (Ps. 33:6–9; 2 Pet. 3:5); and

WHEREAS, The Lord Jesus says that in the beginning God made them male and female (Matt. 19:4–6) and designed human sexuality to be expressed exclusively within the institution of Holy Matrimony (1 Cor. 6:9–11); and

WHEREAS, The apostolic faith confesses that only qualified men are called into the Office of the Holy Ministry (1 Tim. 3:1–7); and

WHEREAS, Despite the clear truth of God's Word, some within our fellowship continue actively to deceive and mislead members of Christ's Body and thereby profane the name of God among us by teaching contrary to God's Word on the matters listed above, thereby destroying the unity of our confession and endangering the eternal welfare of those for whom Christ died; therefore be it

Resolved, That those who no longer confess the faith once delivered to the saints as evidenced in "A Call for Discussion" (*Daystar Journal*, August 2015) be placed under church discipline by their respective district presidents or, if necessary, by the President of the Synod and, absent repentance, be removed from membership in the LCMS in accord with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod.

Concordia
Kingsport, TN

12-39

To Address Concerns re Ecclesiastical Supervision in Constitution and Bylaws

WHEREAS, Constitution Art. XI B 3 defines the duties and responsibilities of the President of the Synod, stating: "The President 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 in all districts of the Synod" (emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, Constitution Art. XI B 7 states, "The President shall perform all additional duties assigned to him by the Bylaws or by special resolution of the Synod in convention"; and

WHEREAS, In defining the matter of ecclesiastical supervision in Synod as it applies to the President of the Synod and district presidents and their responsibility "to supervise on behalf of the Synod the doctrine, life, and administration of its members, officers, and agencies," Synod Bylaw 1.2.1 (i) assigns to the President of the Synod and district presidents the authority to take "appropriate disciplinary measures to assure that the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod are followed and implemented; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1 (b) states: "In the districts of Synod, he [i.e., the President of the Synod] shall carry out his ecclesiastical duties through the district president; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14 deals with the matter of "Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod"; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14.1 identifies the cause for action leading to termination of membership in the Synod; namely, that "it is clear that those who are being terminated after previous futile admonition have acted contrary to the confession laid down in Constitution Art. II or the conditions of membership laid down in Constitution Art. VI or have persisted in offensive conduct (Constitution Art. XIII 1)"; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14.1 (b) states: "The action to commence expulsion of a congregation or individual from membership in the Synod is the sole responsibility of the district president who has the responsibility for ecclesiastical supervision of such member"; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14.5 and 2.14.5.1 indicate that the district president "may" form a Referral Panel made up of three circuit visitors of the district chosen by blind draw to review the accusation and determine whether or not to initiate formal proceedings; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 2.14.5.2 indicates that if the district president or the Referral Panel determines not to initiate formal proceedings, that "shall terminate the matter"; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.3.1.2 (c) (1)–(3) charges the President of the Synod to call up for review any action of an officer or agency of the Synod which may be in violation of the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod. This bylaw further gives the President of the Synod the authority to request that such action be altered or reversed, and, if the matter is not resolved, to refer it to the Synod's Board of Directors, the Commission on Constitutional Matters, or the Synod in convention as he deems appropriate; and

WHEREAS, There is concern regarding the procedure for exercising ecclesiastical supervision by the President of the Synod in a decision to not initiate formal proceedings under Bylaws 2.14.5, 2.14.5.1, and 2.14.5.2. The President of the Synod is the chief ecclesiastical officer of the Synod, charged with the supervision of the doctrine, life, and administration of Synod's members, officers, and agencies. While Bylaw 3.3.1.1.1(b) indicates that the President of the Synod "shall carry out his ecclesiastical duties through the district president," the wording of Constitution Art. XI B 3 speaks of a broader authority of the President of the Synod, charging that he "shall conscientiously use all means at his command"; therefore be it

Resolved, That the South Dakota District in convention affirm the responsibility of the President of the Synod as stated in current Bylaw 3.3.1.2 (c) (1)–(3); and be it further

Resolved, That the Commission on Constitutional Matters, together with the Commission on Handbook and two representatives of the Council of Presidents, one being chosen by the Chairman of the Council of Presidents and one being chosen by the President of the Synod, be formed as a committee to study procedures in the Constitution and Bylaws concerning ecclesiastical supervision in matters concerning the potential expulsion of members of the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That this committee draft proposed revisions to the Bylaws of the Synod which will clarify procedures concerning ecclesiastical supervision in Synod's Constitution and Bylaws and present these proposed revisions to the 2019 LCMS convention for consideration.

South Dakota District

12-40

To Adopt New Method for Dealing with Charges of Heresy Apart from Existing Expulsion Process

WHEREAS, The first objective of the Synod reads: "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*" (Constitution Art. III, emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, The current method of dealing with charges of heresy is through the existing expulsion process; and

WHEREAS, Disputes over behavior or other difficulties in personal relationships are of a nature other than those regarding charges of heresy; and,

WHEREAS, The Synodical Union has had difficulty maintaining this first objective as a result of the inability of the existing expulsion process to handle charges of heresy; therefore be it

Resolved, That the President of the Synod appoint a task force comprised of one professor from each seminary, two district presidents, one parish pastor, one commissioned minister, and three laypersons (one of whom shall be an attorney) to develop bylaws for dealing with heresy, to be presented to the 2019 Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That all charges of heresy be brought directly to the Praesidium of the Synod for a determination as to whether such charges have grounds to be considered under the bylaws for dealing with heresy; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Montana District meeting in convention memorialize the 2016 Synod convention to make this resolution its own.

Montana District

12-41

To Establish Procedure for Removal of Officers of Synod or District from Office

WHEREAS, Recent conventions of the Synod have adopted procedures for the removal of members of boards and commissions and of Synod reconcilers from office; and

WHEREAS, For a variety of reasons, an officer of the Synod or a district may be unable or unwilling to fulfill the duties of his/her office; and

WHEREAS, There is no procedure in the current Bylaws for removal of an officer of the Synod or district from office; and

WHEREAS, Constitution Art. XIA 2 states, "The Synod at all times has the right to call its officers to account and, if circumstances require it, to remove them from office in accordance with Christian procedure"; therefore be it

Resolved, That the following bylaws be adopted and placed into the *Handbook* of the Synod:

PROPOSED WORDING

Removal of Officers of Synod or District from Office

1.5.8 Officers of the Synod and district shall discharge the duties of their offices in good faith. The following are considered cause for removal from office pursuant to this bylaw, but not from membership in the Synod:

1. Incapacity
2. Breach of fiduciary responsibilities to the Synod or agency
3. Neglect or refusal to perform duties of office
4. Conviction of a felony

1.5.8.1 Unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws, the procedure for removal of an officer of the Synod or district from his/her office shall be as follows:

- (a) Action for removal from office of an officer of a district other than a district president shall require written notice to each member of that district's board of directors at least 30 days prior to a special meeting of the board called for that purpose. A copy of such notice shall be sent to the President and the Secretary of the Synod and to the ecclesiastical supervisor, if applicable.
- (b) Action for removal from office of a district president or an officer of the Synod shall require written notice to each member of the Synod's Board of Directors at least 30 days prior to a special meeting of the board called for that purpose. A copy of such notice shall be sent to the President and the Secretary of the Synod and to the ecclesiastical supervisor, if applicable.
- (c) The special meeting shall be held no later than 60 days after the provision of the written notice, unless extended by the mutual agreement of the parties.
- (d) Removal from office of an officer of a district, other than a district president, shall be effected by
 - (1) recommendation of such to the Synod's Board of Directors by a vote in favor of removal by at least three-fourths of all current members of the district board of directors (excluding the officer in question if a member of the board); and
 - (2) by a vote in favor of the recommendation of removal by at least three-fourths of all current members of the Board of Directors of the Synod.
- (e) Removal from office of a district president or an officer of the Synod shall be effected by a vote in favor of the recommendation of removal by at least three-fourths of all current members (excluding the officer in question if a member of the board) of the Board of Directors of the Synod.
- (f) Removal may be appealed by the officer who has been removed from office through the use of the Synod's dispute resolution process as provided in Bylaw 1.10.

1.5.8.2 To the extent that the application of this bylaw is limited by applicable law with respect to the removal officers of the Synod or district from office, the Synod's Board of Directors may recommend the removal and attempt to cause the appropriate procedures under applicable law and these Bylaws to be followed to permit the removal of such officer.

Board of Directors
Southern Illinois District

COMMISSION ON HANDBOOK 2016 LCMS Convention

OMNIBUS OVERTURE #1 (Dispute Resolution)

The Commission on Handbook recognizes that its proposed overtures to the 2016 convention can be grouped together according to same-subject matter to facilitate the work of the floor committee. This “omnibus” overture groups the commission’s bylaw change proposals regarding **dispute resolution/expulsion** into a single overture for the floor committee’s convenience.

A. To Expedite Dispute Resolution and Expulsion Processes

Rationale

Bylaw 1.10.1 speaks of disputes, disagreements, or offenses as “a matter of grave concern for the whole church” that “should be

resolved promptly.” An oft-voiced concern regarding current dispute resolution and suspension/expulsion processes is that they take too long to complete.

In addition, current time frames vary between bylaws governing dispute resolution and suspension/expulsion processes, often for identical steps in the processes. The following changes to Bylaw sections 1.10 and 2.14 will conserve time and provide uniformity. The changes to Bylaw section 2.14 are also, upon adoption by the 2016 convention, to be applied to the 2.15, 2.16, and 2.17 processes as appropriate during preparation of the 2016 *Handbook* of the Synod.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the following changes to Bylaw sections 1.10 and 2.14 be made to conserve time and provide uniformity throughout the Synod dispute resolution and suspension/expulsion processes, with changes to the Bylaw section 2.14 process to be applied to the Bylaw sections 2.15, 2.16, and 2.17 processes during preparation of the 2016 *Handbook*.

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

1.10 Dispute Resolution of the Synod

- 1.10.5 ... (c) Within 45 days of the conclusion of the consultation and receipt of any advice or opinions as described above, the district president shall ...
- 1.10.6.1 The administrator shall ~~promptly~~ within 15 days select the reconciler in the manner hereinafter set forth and then notify the parties ...
- 1.10.7 If the parties to a dispute with the assistance of the reconciler have been unable to achieve reconciliation, the complainant shall notify the Secretary of the Synod with ~~30~~ 15 days after receiving ...
- 1.10.7.2 ... Within ~~30~~ 15 days after the appointment of the panel, the hearing facilitator shall confer with the parties to the dispute and the Dispute Resolution Panel for the purpose of choosing a location ...
- 1.10.7.3 The formal hearing before the Dispute Resolution Panel, conducted by a hearing facilitator, shall take place within ~~60~~ 45 days after the ~~date of the final~~ selection of the ~~hearing facilitator~~ location and date of the formal hearing, unless there is unanimous consent by the panel members for a short delay beyond such ~~60~~ 45 days for reasons the panel deems appropriate.
- 1.10.7.4 ... (b) Within ~~60~~ 30 days after the hearing, the panel shall issue a written decision that shall state the facts determined by the panel ...
- 1.10.8 Within ~~30~~ 15 days after receiving the decision of the Dispute Resolution Panel, any party to the dispute or the President of the Synod ... may appeal ...
- 1.10.8.2 Within ~~30~~ 21 days after receipt, an Appeal Panel shall be selected in the prescribed manner, and the Secretary of the Synod shall send the appeal ...

2.14 Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod

- 2.14.3 ... (f) ~~Only~~ Within 45 days after all the requirements of the consultation provided in this bylaw (Bylaw 2.14.3) have been followed may the accuser ...
- 2.14.5.3 ... the Referral Panel shall carry out these provisions in the process of making its determination within 60 days whether or not to initiate formal proceedings.
- 2.14.6 ... the district president in commencing formal proceedings shall ... (c) provide to the member a written notification that the member has 15 days from the date of receipt of the statement of the matter ...
- 2.14.7.6 Within 15 days after the Hearing Panel is constituted, the hearing facilitator shall, after conferring with the panel, the accused, and the district president who imposed the suspended status, select a date ...
- 2.14.7.6 ...and location within 45 days after the Hearing Panel was constituted for the panel to hear and consider the matter, unless there is unanimous consent by the panel members for a short delay beyond such 45 days for reasons the panel deems appropriate.
- 2.14.7.9 Upon completion of the hearing, the Hearing Panel shall deliberate and then issue its written decision within 30 days.
- 2.14.8 The decision of the Hearing Panel may be appealed by the accused ... within 15 days after receiving the decision. ...
- 2.14.8 ... (a) Within ~~30~~ 21 days after receipt of an appeal from the accused or the President of the Synod, an Appeal Panel shall be selected ...

- 1.10.8.3 Within 30 days after its formation, the Appeal Panel shall issue its written decision in response to the request for reconsideration.
- 1.10.8.4 If an appeal is granted, the Secretary of the Synod, or his representative, shall, within 21 days, select a Review Panel...

and be it further

Resolved, That because unforeseen circumstances can make adherence to time frames in the above processes impossible at times,

- 1.10.4 ... (p) **Exception: Shall:** Retains its compulsory meaning in this bylaw section. Its use, however, in connection with time frame expectations may require exception due to insurmountable circumstances, to be allowed by the administrator of the process.

(pq) ...

- 2.14.8 ... (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 ...

- 2.14.9 Within ~~30~~ 21 days after the receipt of the decision of the Appeal Panel ... , a Final Hearing Panel shall be selected.

the addition of the following paragraphs in the definitions bylaws governing the dispute resolution and expulsion processes will allow exceptions when necessary:

- 2.14.2 ... (s) **Exception: Shall:** Retains its compulsory meaning in this bylaw section. Its use, however, in connection with time frame expectations may require exception due to insurmountable circumstances, to be allowed by the administrator of the process.

(st) ...

B. To Add “Appeal Panel” to Bylaw Section 2.14 Definitions

Rationale

When Res. 7-12A was adopted by the 2013 convention, incorporating an appeal panel process into the Synod’s expulsion processes, the inclusion of a definition of “Appeal Panel” in Bylaw 2.14.2 was overlooked. The Commission on Handbook proposes the following addition to this bylaw, identical to the definition of “Appeal Panel” in Bylaw 1.10.4 for the dispute resolution process, which addition to Bylaw 2.14.2 will also pertain to the expulsion processes provided in Bylaw sections 2.15 and 2.17).

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.14.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

The definitions of terms used in this bylaw are as follows:

(a) **Accused:** The party named by the accuser as being in violation of Constitution Art. XIII and under the procedural ecclesiastical supervision of Bylaw sections 2.14–2.17.

(b) **Accuser:** The party who accuses a member under the provisions of Constitution Art. XIII through the process of Bylaw sections 2.14–2.17.

(c) **Appeal Panel:** Three district presidents selected according to these bylaws to determine whether the decision of a Hearing Panel should be reconsidered or reviewed.

(ed) ...

C. To Clarify Bylaw 1.10.2 re Availability of Dispute Resolution Process

Rationale

The Synod strongly values its process for dispute resolution and requires that disputes between eligible parties be adjudicated using the process outlined in Bylaw section 1.10. Over the course of time, certain wording of current Bylaw 1.10.2 has been identified as potentially causing confusion regarding who is eligible to use the process.

The bylaw includes “persons involved in excommunication” among parties for whom the Synod’s conflict resolution procedures are designed. However, the only other mention of cases involving excommunication in Bylaw section 1.10, Bylaw 1.10.10.2, which identifies four situations in which district reconcilers may be used, speaks of “procedural questions involved in excommunication cases.”

The current wording of Bylaw 1.10.2 often leads parties involved in excommunication to have unrealistic expectations, including the expectation that the process will deal with the issues which led to the excommunication rather than only addressing procedural questions.

In addition, because the persons involved may be laypersons who are not under “ecclesiastical supervision” as defined in Bylaw 1.2.1 (i), they have no ecclesiastical supervisor to consult with as directed by Bylaws 1.10.5 and 1.10.6. The following simple changes will help to provide clarity on both counts.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 1.10.2, 1.10.5, and 1.10.6 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

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) ~~the Synod itself;~~ (3) ~~a district or an organization owned and controlled by~~ (2) corporate Synod or an agency of the Synod; (4) ~~persons involved in~~ (3) members of congregations challenging the procedure used in their excommunication; or (5) ~~lay members of congregations of the Synod holding elected or appointed to positions with the Synod itself or with districts and other organizations owned and controlled by the Synod~~ LCMS Board of Directors or an agency of the Synod. It shall be ...

1.10.5 Before any matter is submitted to the formal reconciliation process, the parties involved in a dispute must meet together, face-to-face, in a good-faith attempt to settle their dispute in the manner described in Matthew 18:15 and may involve the informal use of a reconciler. And further, before any matter is submitted to the formal reconciliation process, the complainant must meet and consult with ~~his or her~~ the appropriate ecclesiastical supervisor to seek advice and also so that it can be determined whether this is the appropriate bylaw procedure (Bylaw section 1.10) or whether the matter falls under Bylaw sections 1.8, 2.14, 2.15, 2.16, or 2.17, or Bylaws 3.10.4.7.9 and 3.10.5.6.4.2. In regard to this consultation: ...

1.10.6 If any party to the dispute is of the opinion that informal reconciliation efforts have failed, such party, in consultation with ~~his/ her/its~~ the appropriate ecclesiastical supervisor, shall submit a request to the administrator of the dispute resolution process, the secretary of the Synod or district, or an appointee, as appropriate, that a reconciler be appointed to assist in seeking reconciliation. Such request shall be accompanied by: ...

D. To Update Bylaws re Appointment and Replacement of District Reconcilers

Rationale

Current Bylaws 1.10.10 and 1.10.10.1 contain requirements for the appointment and replacement of district reconcilers that are no longer reasonable or practicable. These bylaws will better and more accurately read as proposed.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 1.10.10 and 1.10.10.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

1.10.10 ~~Within three months after conventions of the Synod, each~~ district board of directors shall appoint and maintain a district roster of four reconcilers (ministers of religion—ordained, ministers of religion—commissioned, and laypersons), no more than two of whom shall be ~~ordained ministers of religion—ordained~~, from a list supplied by the circuit visitors of the district. The Synod shall provide appropriate training within six months following each national Synod convention.

1.10.10.1 The term of service of a reconciler shall be six years, renewable immediately following every even-numbered Synod convention (2010, 2016, etc.) without term limitations. ~~They~~ Reconcilers shall be people “of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). ~~Vacancies for an unexpired term shall be filled by the district board of directors in the same manner as regular appointments by the district board of directors within 30 days following their occurrence. The district board of directors may add to the district roster of reconcilers a reconciler who moves has moved into the district from another district where appointed.~~

E. To Update Bylaws re Appointment and Replacement of Hearing Facilitators

Rationale

Current Bylaws 1.10.12–1.10.12.3 provide for the appointment and replacement of dispute resolution and expulsion process hearing facilitators. These bylaws require updating and will better and more accurately read as follows.

The Commission on Handbook therefore proposes the following changes:

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 identify 25 hearing facilitators selected from the roster of the trained reconcilers. They may be ordained ministers, commissioned ministers, or laypersons, who and shall exhibit skills in the proper conduct of a fair and impartial hearing. ~~to comprise the Synod’s roster of hearing facilitators, who~~ They shall be trained 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 even-numbered conventions of the Synod (2010, 2016, etc.), the Secretary of the Synod shall contact those all hearing facilitators ~~whose terms have been completed~~ 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 ~~or which results from a decision not to continue at the end of a term of service~~ shall be filled in the same manner as described above ~~as needed and as requested by the Secretary of the Synod.~~

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, ~~if on the roster of hearing facilitators, shall may~~ remain as a member ~~of on~~ the Synod’s roster of hearing facilitators ~~until the term of service of the hearing facilitator expires.~~

1.10.12.3 A hearing facilitator shall not serve as a reconciler or as a voting member of a panel.

F. To Strengthen Bylaw 1.10.2, Requiring Members to Honor the Dispute Resolution Procedure

Rationale

Members of the Synod (ministers of religion—ordained or ministers of religion—commissioned and congregations) by their membership agree to honor dispute resolution decisions (Bylaw 1.10.2). On occasion, member congregations that have received an unfavorable result from the dispute resolution procedure have disregarded binding decisions, relinquished membership, and received support for such actions from a civil court, the court failing to comprehend the nature of membership in the Synod.

Short of proposing a constitutional amendment to make clear the binding nature of the dispute resolution procedure on members of the Synod, the Commission on Handbook proposes that Bylaw 1.10.2 be amended to make even more clear this requirement of membership in the Synod.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.10.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Purpose

1.10.2 This procedure is established to resolve, in a God-pleasing manner, disputes ... that involve theological, doctrinal, or ecclesiastical issues except those covered under Bylaw sections 2.14–2.17 and except as provided in Bylaw 1.10.3, and shall be binding on all parties. It is applicable whether the dispute involves only a difference of opinion without personal animosity or is one that involves ill will and sin that requires repentance and forgiveness. No person, congregation, or agency to whom or to which the provisions of this dispute resolution process are applicable because of their membership in because such person or agency is a member of the Synod may render these provisions this procedure inapplicable by terminating that membership during the course of the dispute resolution process.

G. To Provide Opportunity for District Presidents to Appeal Hearing Panel Decisions

Rationale

Current Bylaws 2.14.7.9, 2.14.8, 2.17.7.9, and 2.17.8 do not grant to the involved district president the same right to request examination

of a decision of a Hearing Panel to an Appeal Panel as they grant to the member who has been suspended by the district president and the President of the Synod (if a question of doctrine or practice is involved). One of the participants most involved in these important processes is thereby not granted the same important opportunity as the other.

The Commission on Handbook, believing that this was an oversight when the appeal process was incorporated into the Bylaw 2.14 and 2.17 dispute resolution processes by a convention, proposes that the involved district president also be provided opportunity to appeal a Hearing Panel decision by amending these bylaws as follows.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, that Bylaws 2.14.7.9, 2.14.8, 2.17.7.9, and 2.17.8 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.14.7.9 Upon completion of the hearing, the Hearing Panel shall deliberate and then issue its written decision within 30 days.

(a) Copies of the decision shall be mailed to the accused, the district president who imposed the suspension, the accuser and his/her district president, the Secretary of the Synod, and the President of the Synod.

(b) The decision of the Hearing Panel shall be subject to appeal by the accused, the district president who imposed the suspension, or the President of the Synod.

...

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 district president who imposed the suspension, or by the President of the Synod if a question of doctrine or practice is involved (Constitution Art. XI B 1-3) ...

2.17.7.9 Upon completion of the hearing, the Hearing Panel shall deliberate and then issue its written decision within 30 days.

(a) Copies of the decision shall be mailed to the accused, the district president who imposed the suspension, the accuser and his/her district president, the Secretary of the Synod, and the President of the Synod.

(b) The decision of the Hearing Panel shall be subject to appeal by the accused, the district president who imposed the suspension, or the President of the Synod.

...

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 ecclesiastical supervisor who imposed the suspension, or by the President of the Synod if a question of doctrine or practice is involved (Constitution Art. XI B 1-3) ...

H. To Remove Detail Regarding Expense Responsibilities from Bylaw 2.14.7.8 (e)

Rationale

Recognizing its responsibility to provide for “the ongoing maintenance and management of the *Handbook*” (Bylaw 3.9.4), the Commission on Handbook proposes that such detail in the Synod’s expulsion process that assigns responsibility for expenses would be better addressed in the general rules section of the *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* provided by the Commission on Constitutional Matters for each procedure.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 2.14.7.8 (e) be removed from the Bylaws of the Synod as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

2.14.7.8 The following guidelines are applicable to the Hearing Panel and all involved persons:

...

(d) Any member of the Synod, officer of a congregation, or officer of any organization owned or controlled by the Synod shall, when called upon by the panel to do so, testify or produce records related to the matter.

~~(e) Each party to the matter shall assume its own expenses. The expenses of the panel shall be borne by the district or the Synod.~~

~~(fe) No party to the matter, nor anyone on the party’s behalf, shall communicate either directly or indirectly with the panel or any member of the panel without the full knowledge of the other party to the matter.~~

...

I. To Add Definition of *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* to Pertinent Bylaws

Rationale

Current bylaws governing dispute resolution assume the existence of regular updating of a *Standard Operating Procedures Manual* for each of the dispute resolution processes in the Bylaws of the Synod but fail to define what such manuals are and the purpose they serve.

The Commission on Handbook proposes that the following definition inserted into the definitions sections of the two primary dispute resolution processes in the *Handbook* of the Synod be adopted by the 2016 convention of the Synod.

Proposed Action

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the following new paragraphs be inserted into Bylaws 1.10.4 and 2.14.2, as follows:

PROPOSED WORDING

1.10.4 In order to communicate effectively and avoid misunderstanding, it is critical that terms be carefully defined:

...

(p) *Standard Operating Procedures Manual*: A comprehensive procedures manual developed by the Commission on Constitutional Matters in consultation with the Secretary of the Synod and the Council of Presidents to ensure uniformity and consistency in the implementation of this bylaw section.

(pq) ...

2.14.2 The definitions of terms used in this bylaw are as follows:

...

(s) *Standard Operating Procedures Manual*: A comprehensive procedures manual developed by the Commission on Constitutional Matters in consultation with the Secretary of the Synod and with the concurrence of the Council of Presidents to ensure uniformity and consistency in the implementation of this bylaw section.

(st) ...

Commission on Handbook

12-43

**To Amend Synod Bylaw 2.11.2.2 to Allow
Candidates to Remain on Candidate Roster
Beyond Four Years**

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (a), as worded in the 2013 *Handbook*, does not explicitly grant the ability for a minister of religion on candidate status to remain on candidate status beyond the stated four-year window; and

WHEREAS, Such ministers of religion may still wish to receive a call and be considered candidates; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod Bylaw 2.11.2.2 (a) be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

(a) A candidate may ~~be continued~~ continue on the roster for ~~a period not to exceed four years~~ an indefinite period of time by act of the president of the district through which the person holds membership.

Emmaus
South Bend, IN

FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

13. Routes to Ministry

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R2, R2.1, R2.2, R11, R56, R59, R61, R62, R64

OVERTURES

13-01

To Address Licensed Lay Administration of Word and Sacrament

WHEREAS, Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession states, “Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the church or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call”; and

WHEREAS, In 1989, our Synod at Wichita adopted Res. 3-05B, regularizing under particular circumstances that the following be done by men who do not hold the Office of the Public Ministry: composing and delivering sermons, leading public worship services, and administering Holy Baptism and Holy Communion (1989 *Proceedings*, pp. 111–113); and

WHEREAS, There has been tension over this issue for the past 25 years; and

WHEREAS, In 2007, the Synod established the “Specific Ministry Pastor Program” in which men are trained, examined, certified, called, and ordained in order to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments (Res. 5-01B, 2007 *Proceedings*, pp. 133ff); and

WHEREAS, This program was designed to meet the objective, among others, of providing pastoral ministry where full-time ministry cannot be maintained and doing so without conflicting with Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Northern Illinois District respectfully request the Synod to discontinue the new licensing of laymen to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments (1989 Res. 3-05B); and be it further

Resolved, That those who are currently licensed be encouraged to enroll in the regular or SMP track leading to ordination; and be it further

Resolved, That those who are currently licensed but not enrolled in the regular (i.e., residential seminary) or SMP track discontinue publicly preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments within three years of the adoption of this resolution by the Synod in convention; and be it further

Resolved, That an extension of the above deadline for those currently licensed can be granted by the appropriate district president in extreme circumstance, and this upon consultation with and the agreement of the President of the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Northern Illinois District in convention submit this resolution as an overture to the Synod for consideration by its 2016 convention.

Northern Illinois District

13-02

To Assure That All Men Who Serve as Pastors Are Pastors

WHEREAS, In certain situations today, the Synod approves of preaching and administration of the Sacraments by men who have not been publicly called to and placed in the Office of the Holy Ministry.

This position is expressed in 1989 Res. 3-05B: “[W]hen no pastor is available, and in the absence of any specific scriptural directives to the contrary, congregations may arrange for the performance of these distinctive functions [preaching and administering the Sacraments] by qualified individuals”; and

WHEREAS, The Augsburg Confession’s Article XIV reads: “Concerning church government it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call”; and

WHEREAS, The systematic theology faculties of both seminaries, acting jointly, have published the detailed statement “The Office of the Holy Ministry” (*Concordia Journal* 33.3 [July 2007]: 242–255), which states in part, “The Confessions never use the truth that the whole church possesses the power of the keys to make the office of the holy ministry unnecessary or merely useful. On the contrary, this truth serves as the basis for the church’s right to call, choose, and ordain ministers. . . . The point is that the Treatise [on the Power and Primacy of the Pope] does not imagine churches without ordained ministers of some kind even in emergency situations or when no one else will call and ordain men for the office. As confessors of the same doctrine, neither should we. . . . Call and ordination are essential for conduct of the ministry. . . . What is the sign of authority for ministers today? It is their call and ordination, which assure they act by divine right and on the authority of Christ. This truth makes such ideas as lay ministers’ invitations for difficulties and troubles to ministers whose authority is doubtful and to laypersons whose assurance of God’s grace may be questioned” (pp. 253–254, 255); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has established a specific ministry pastor (SMP) status to enable ministry of called and ordained pastors in a variety of ministry settings, and the Synod through its seminaries has established SMP programs of study to allow a nonresidential path to ordination into the Office of the Holy Ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has a Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry to determine qualifications and suitability of applicants for pastoral service in the Synod, and this committee has the responsibility to “establish and monitor academic, theological, and personal standards for admission to the office of the pastoral ministry by colloquy” (Bylaw 3.10.2.2); therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention direct the Council of Presidents to develop and implement a plan to ensure that all men who are currently engaged in Word and Sacrament ministry without being publicly called to and placed in the Office of the Holy Ministry be enrolled in the SMP program to fulfill the standards necessary for call and ordination or if applicable apply for colloquy, or cease from all forms of Word and Sacrament ministry by the end of 2017; and be it further

Resolved, That all current Synod and district tracks, programs, licensing procedures, etc. that train men for Word and Sacrament ministry without the benefit of being publicly called, ordained, and placed into the Office of the Holy Ministry be phased out in favor of the SMP program or colloquy by the end of 2017.

Southern Illinois District

13-03

To Support Resolution 4-06A Task Force Recommendations

WHEREAS, The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach that while our Lord gave the Keys of the Kingdom to His whole Church, the royal priesthood of believers (Matt. 16:15–19; 18:18–20; 1 Pet.

2:9; AC XXVIII 10; SA III 7; Tr 11), He also established an office for teaching and nurturing His royal priests by means of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments (the Office of the Public Ministry) that is distinct from the priesthood of believers (1 Cor. 12:29; Rom. 10:15; James 3:1; AC XIV); and

WHEREAS, The royal priesthood and the Office of the Public Ministry are to have a complementary and not a competitive or conflicted relationship; and

WHEREAS, In its history, the Lutheran Church has in various ways prepared men for the Office of the Public Ministry; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church has always ensured (1) that men who are to serve in the Office of Public Ministry be examined as to their doctrine and life; (2) that the congregations they serve willingly call them into service; and (3) that the wider church (other churches in fellowship with the congregation) also affirms them as fellow ministers of the Word and Sacraments (see Acts 1:15–26; 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5; Tr 24, 26, 67–70); and

WHEREAS, Ordination, although not a divine institution (*Church and Ministry*, Ministry Thesis VI), is the apostolic custom by which Lutherans have designated and publicly acknowledged a man as a minister of Word and Sacrament; that is, as one who is in the Office of the Public Ministry and recognized by the wider fellowship as a fellow minister (Ap XIII 11–13); and

WHEREAS, In faithfulness to the Word of God and to its confession requiring a regular call for those who preach and administer the Sacraments publicly in the church (AC XIV), the LCMS has followed the practice of identifying those who are eligible to be called into the Office of the Public Ministry either by the endorsement of its seminaries or through colloquy; and

WHEREAS, There is a need in every congregation and also in mission efforts for “men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God [who] speak in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:17) to proclaim publicly the saving Gospel and administer our Lord’s Sacraments; and

WHEREAS, There is a need within the LCMS to regularize the status of licensed lay deacons who are engaged in Word and Sacrament ministry at the request and call of a local congregation with appropriate oversight by their respective district presidents; and

WHEREAS, The presence of continuing dissension about licensed lay deacons is an aspect of further disagreement about elements of doctrine and practice (e.g., the understanding of the pastoral office; the relationship between the Office of the Public Ministry, call, and ordination; and faithful and effective ways to share the Gospel and plant churches in our post-Christian world); and

WHEREAS, The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program was established by the LCMS as an effective way to provide theological education and training for pastors in appropriate settings and situations; and

WHEREAS, Both Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) and Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne) provide SMP students with the theological and practical education necessary to carry out that ministry appropriately and become rostered as specific ministry pastors in the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS, while mindful of the need for continued conversation within the church, affirm the theological framework of the 2013 Res. 4-06A Task Force Report; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS establish and implement an expanded colloquy program to regularize the status of those men who regularly preach and administer the Sacraments (who are *de facto* pastors) so that these servants of Christ can be called and ordained according to the order of the LCMS and be rostered as pastors with SMP status; and be it further

Resolved, That, as recommended by the Res. 4-06A Task Force, the LCMS provide funding to ensure that financial constraints will not prevent any eligible licensed lay deacon from participating in an LCMS seminary ordination-track program; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS thank and commend the Res. 4-06A Task Force for its work on the question of licensed lay deacons.

Concordia Seminary Faculty
St. Louis, MO

13-04

To Implement Res. 4-06A Task Force Recommendations

WHEREAS, The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach that while our Lord gave the keys of the kingdom to His whole Church, the royal priesthood of believers (Matt. 16:15–19; Matt. 18:18–20; 1 Pet. 2:9; AC XXVIII 10; SA III 7; Tr 11), He also established an office for teaching and nurturing His royal priests by means of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments (the Office of the Public Ministry) that is distinct from the priesthood of believers (1 Cor. 12:29; Rom. 10:15; James 3:1; AC XIV). Thus, the royal priesthood and the Office of the Public Ministry are to have a complementary and not a competitive or conflicted relationship; and

WHEREAS, In its history, the Lutheran Church has in various ways prepared men for the Office of the Public Ministry, ensuring that men who are to serve in the Office of Public Ministry be examined as to their doctrine and life, that the congregations they serve willingly call them into service, and that the wider church (other churches in fellowship with the congregation) also affirms them as fellow ministers of the Word and Sacraments (see Acts 1:15–26; Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5; Tr 24, 26, 67–70); and

WHEREAS, Ordination, although not a divine institution (see *Church and Ministry*, Ministry Thesis VI), is the apostolic custom by which Lutherans have designated and publicly acknowledged a man as a minister of Word and Sacrament—that is, as one who is in the Office of the Public Ministry and recognized by the wider fellowship as a fellow minister (Ap XIII 11–13). In faithfulness to the Word of God and to its confession requiring a regular call for those who preach and administer the Sacraments publicly in the church (AC XIV), the LCMS has followed the practice of identifying those who are eligible to be called into the Office of the Public Ministry either by the endorsement of its seminaries or through colloquy; and

WHEREAS, There is currently within the LCMS the need to regularize the status of licensed lay deacons who are engaged in Word and Sacrament ministry at the request and call of a local congregation with appropriate oversight by their respective district presidents. Because the presence of continuing dissension about licensed lay deacons is an aspect of further disagreement about elements of doctrine and practice (e.g., the understanding of the pastoral office; the relationship between the Office of the Public Ministry, call, and ordination; as well as faithful and effective ways to share the Gospel and plant churches in our post-Christian world), the LCMS established the Specific Ministry Pastors (SMP) program in 2007 as an effective way to provide theological education and training for pastors in appropriate settings and situations. Both Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) and Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne) provide SMP students with the theological and practical education necessary to carry out that ministry appropriately and become rostered as specific ministry pastors in the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS, while mindful of the need for continued conversation within the church, affirm the theological framework of the 2013 Resolution 4-06A Task Force Report; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS establish and implement an expanded colloquy program, administered by the Pastoral Colloquy Committee, to regularize the status of those men ordinarily age 55 and older who regularly preach and administer the Sacraments (who are *de facto* pastors) so that these servants of Christ can be called and ordained according to the order of the LCMS and be rostered as pastors with SMP status (2013 Resolution 4-06A Task Force Report to the Synod, pp. 15-21); and be it further

Resolved, That licensed lay deacons under age 55 who regularly preach and administer the Sacraments will be required to enter the SMP program or another LCMS seminary ordination-track program; and be it further

Resolved, That no new deacons will be licensed by district presidents for Word and Sacrament ministry after January 1, 2018, and that a lay deacon licensed for Word and Sacrament prior to July 1, 2017, will have until July 1, 2018, to either (1) apply to one of the LCMS seminaries for an “alternate route” program or the Master of Divinity program; (2) apply to one of the LCMS seminaries for the SMP program; (3) apply to the Colloquy Committee for admission to the SMP roster by colloquy if he is 55 or older; or (4) allow his license to lapse and discontinue service as a licensed lay deacon by July 1, 2018; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS provide funding to ensure that financial constraints will not prevent any eligible candidate from participating in an LCMS seminary ordination-track program; and be it finally

Resolved, That the LCMS thank and commend the Res. 4-06A Task Force for its work on the question of licensed lay deacons.

Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, IN

13-05

To Direct the Council of Presidents to Enact a Plan to Return to Faithful Practice

WHEREAS, The 2013 LCMS convention adopted Res. 4-06A, which directed the following:

Resolved, That in faithfulness to God’s Word and Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession regarding the Office of the Holy Ministry, the President of Synod would direct the CTCR to develop resources for use on the congregational, district, and Synod levels concerning this issue; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod, who has the responsibility “to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod” (Constitution, Art. XI B 3), be encouraged to use all means at his disposal to promote study and discussion of this vital issue; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod establish a task force consisting of members from the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the Council of Presidents, the Praesidium, and seminary faculties to develop a plan anchored in the Word, in consultation with licensed lay deacons and those who supervise and are served by them, to resolve questions about the service of licensed lay deacons serving congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with the Word and Sacraments of Christ; and be it finally

Resolved, That the plan and its proposed implementation be reported to the Synod one year before the 2016 convention.

and

WHEREAS, The theological basis of Res. 4-06A remains Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession, which states: “Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call,” and Article V of the same, which states:

So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given (John 20:22).

and

WHEREAS, The Central Illinois District of the LCMS in convention in 2012 passed a resolution “To Require Uniformity of Practice with Regard to Word and Sacrament Ministry” which expressed our regret with the current practice within the LCMS of “men who are conducting Word and Sacrament ministry without being publicly called to, and placed in, the office of the ministry”; and

WHEREAS, In that same resolution, the Central Illinois District also memorialized the Synod in convention “to direct the Council of Presidents to develop a plan and lay out procedures”:

(A) So that all men who are currently engaged in Word and Sacrament ministry without being publicly called to, and placed in, the office of the ministry may either be enrolled in the SMP program or cease from all forms of Word and Sacrament ministry by the end of 2019, and

(B) So that all current Synod and district tracks, programs, licensing procedures, etc. which train men for Word and Sacrament ministry without benefit of being publicly called to, and placed in, the office of the ministry can be phased out in favor of SMP by the end of 2019 ...

and

WHEREAS, The Task Force established by the 2013 Synod convention has been doing its work as directed and, based on updates posted to the convention update webpage dedicated to Resolution 4-06A (<http://www.lcms.org/convention/taskforceupdates/resolution-4-06A>), is planning to distribute its report in hard copy and electronically to each member of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The task force intends for a synodwide discussion of its report to take place prior to the 2016 Synod convention; and

WHEREAS, The scriptural and confessional basis of the 2013 Central Illinois District Convention’s resolution has not changed, as the Word of God is unchangeable, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away” (Luke 21:33); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Central Illinois District thank the members of the Resolution 4-06A Task Force for their work in studying the ongoing challenge of men who are conducting Word and Sacrament ministry without being publicly called to, and placed in, the Office of the Ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That the Central Illinois District thank the men currently serving as licensed lay deacons for their service to Christ’s Church for the sake of the Gospel, and that the chaplain of the convention lead us in prayer that our Lord would lead these men to seek ordination according to His good and gracious will; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Central Illinois District memorialize the Synod in convention to direct the Council of Presidents to enact the following plan to return the Synod to a faithful practice of her confession:

1. All the districts of the Synod shall immediately discontinue the licensing of lay deacons (1989 Res. 3-05B).

2. All men currently engaged in Word and Sacrament ministry without being publicly called to, and placed in, the Office of the Ministry will be enrolled in either a residential program at one of our two seminaries by the end of 2019 or in the specific ministry pastor (SMP) program, or will cease all forms of Word and Sacrament min-

istry within that same timeframe. An extension of the above deadline for those currently licensed can be granted by the appropriate district president in extreme circumstance, upon consultation with and approval of the President of the Synod.

3. All the current Synod and district tracks, programs, licensing procedures, and the like which train men for Word and Sacrament ministry without benefit of being publicly called to, and placed in, the Office of the Ministry will be discontinued as soon as possible, but no later than the end of 2019, in favor of either the residential programs at our two seminaries or the SMP program.
4. The districts in which men currently serve as licensed lay deacons will ensure that these men be provided reasonable assistance in pursuing ordination or finding an alternative vocation.

Central Illinois District

13-06

To Accept and Act on Recommendations of 2013 Res. 4-06A Task Force Report

WHEREAS, The matter of licensed lay deacons has been a matter of contention within the Synod for years; and

WHEREAS, As a result of 2013 Res. 4-06A, a task force has issued an extensive and informed report that includes eight helpful recommendations addressing not only the subject of licensed lay deacons itself but also the wider and important subject of evangelism training within the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Carrollton Circuit Forum calls upon the Synod in 2016 to accept the recommendations of the Res. 4-06A Task Force; and be it further

Resolved, That the Carrollton Circuit Forum urge the Synod to implement these recommendations as soon as possible.

Carrollton Circuit Forum
Missouri District

13-07

To Accept and Implement 4-06A Task Force Report

WHEREAS, The 2013 LCMS convention adopted Res. 4-06A; and

WHEREAS, The 4-06A Task Force has completed its report and given its recommendations; therefore it be

Resolved, That the Synod in convention accept the 4-06A Task Force report; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod implement the recommendations of the 4-06A Task Force and specifically recommendation 1, “that those licensed lay deacons who are regularly preaching and administering the sacraments be required to apply for a colloquy to examine their ability to teach and overall fitness for ministry. Upon certification by the Colloquy Committee they will be called by the congregations where they have been serving, ordained into the Office of the Public Ministry, and placed on the roster of specific ministry pastors.”

St. Paul
Hamel, IL

13-08

To Address Lay Ministry According to Confessions and Constitution of LCMS

WHEREAS, The LCMS Constitution states that “[t]he Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation...[a]ll the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God” (Art. II 2), which are otherwise known as the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the LCMS is also the constitution of each district of the Synod (Art. XII 2); and

WHEREAS, Each individual pastor of the LCMS has vowed to perform the duties of his office in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and these Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, “The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod requires that its member congregations accept the confessional standard of the Synod” (“Guidelines for Constitutions and Bylaws of Lutheran Congregations,” May 2006, p. 5, accessed online Aug. 5, 2011; a PDF of the document can be found in the Helpful Documents tab of Resources of the Commission on Constitutional Matters at lcms.org); and

WHEREAS, The original German of Article 5 of the Augsburg Confession of the Lutheran Confessions states that “God established the preaching office (*Predigtamt*) for teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments,” which was understood historically as the pastoral office (AC V 1, Concordia *Triglotta* ed., Northwestern Publishing House, 1927, pp. 44-45); and

WHEREAS, The original Latin of Article XIV of the same Augsburg Confession states that “no one should publicly teach in the church or administer the sacraments unless he be called by the public ceremony” (*nisi rite vocatus*), which was understood historically as referring only to the pastoral office (AC XIV, *Triglotta*, pp. 48-49); and

WHEREAS, The 1989 LCMS convention at Wichita, Kansas, allowed for lay people to preach and administer the sacraments publicly in LCMS congregations at worship—though this is contrary to Scripture and Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, Later conventions of the LCMS have tried to resolve this issue with overtures/resolutions both in favor of and opposed to allowing lay people to publicly preach and administer sacraments; and

WHEREAS, District and Synod programs currently offer lay ministry training for lay people to publicly preach and administer sacraments; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the LCMS states: “Members who act contrary to the confession laid down in Article II and to the condition of membership laid down in Article VI, or persist in an offensive conduct shall, after previous futile admonition, be expelled from the Synod” (Art. XIII 1), which can even result in a congregation that supports and defends such a member forfeiting its rights of membership in the LCMS “if all negotiations and admonitions fail of their purpose” (Art. XIII 3); and

WHEREAS, There is a great division in the LCMS over lay people publicly preaching, baptizing in a church service, or consecrating communion elements; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the LCMS states: “All matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God” (Art. VIII C); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention insist that district, Synod, or other programs that result in lay people publicly preaching or administering sacraments should be suspended from further

activity until this division is resolved according to God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That measures be investigated by the Synod President, district presidents, and circuit visitors to allow more time for pastors who feel overwhelmed with their duties, so they may not be overstressed or burn out, but without resorting to lay people publicly preaching or administering sacraments in their place; and be it further

Resolved, That these measures be prepared by the next regular Synod convention; and be it finally

Resolved, That the district presidents, according to their constitutional duties (Art. XII 7–8), admonish those congregations in their districts in which lay people are publicly preaching and administering the sacraments, as well as those individuals or entities who are enabling and/or training such lay ministers, and report on their findings to the Synod President to be reported at the next regular Synod convention.

Zion
Chippewa Falls, WI

13-09

To Create New Task Forces to Study Licensing of Lay Deacons

WHEREAS, It is to be applauded that the conclusion of the Res. 4-06A Task Force report cites the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:10 and his desire for unity in Christ: "I appeal to you ... that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you"; and

WHEREAS, The very definition of *synod* is that the congregations of said synod are to "walk together" in, as some have said, "covenants of love" with one another; and

WHEREAS, The expressed purpose of the work of the task force established by the 2013 Synod convention sought to develop a plan "anchored in the Word, in consultation with licensed lay deacons and those who supervise and are served by them, to resolve questions about the service of licensed lay deacons serving congregations of the LCMS with the Word and Sacraments of Christ"; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has chosen in its freedom to utilize a representative form of decision-making in its governance (a human construct and not a divine mandate), the formation of the members of the task force were not representative of those directly impacted by the task force's conclusions and recommendations; and

WHEREAS, While 77 percent of LCMS districts (27 districts) utilize licensed lay deacons in some form, and 54 percent of districts (19 districts) utilize them in Word and Sacrament ministry, the task force itself included no district presidents where licensed lay deacons are significantly used in Word and Sacrament ministry. In addition, no licensed lay deacon currently serving in both Word AND Sacrament ministry, no supervising pastor, nor any member of a congregation currently being served by a licensed lay deacon in Word and Sacrament ministry was included on the task force itself; and

WHEREAS, This lack of representation is a clear contradiction to the expressed desire of both the Synod in convention as well as the purposes of the task force, which is to bring unity and reduce division among us; and

WHEREAS, No congregation being served by a licensed lay deacon with Word and Sacrament ministry has filed a formal complaint regarding the work being done, and no licensed lay deacon has filed a formal dissent regarding the Synod's appropriate training and placement of them in Word and Sacrament ministry; and

WHEREAS, The opposite is in fact the case—namely, that congregations in need are earnestly seeking and exceedingly grateful for the work being done in their midst by licensed lay deacons; and

WHEREAS, The concerns expressed by individuals within our Synod have arisen from those outside of direct ecclesial supervision, training, and partnership with licensed lay deacons in such work; and

WHEREAS, Justification for the work of the task force might be mandated if there had been numerous formal complaints from within the congregations being served by licensed lay deacons; and

WHEREAS, Primarily anecdotal (and not systemic) evidence has been cited and compiled, making these conclusions based solely upon a limited and not comprehensive compilation nor knowledge of ministry circumstances and conditions; and

WHEREAS, Following common sense and using the best possible procedures offered through our God-given human intellect (our Lord Himself commands us to utilize the best possible practices and procedures in our work as His Church by strategically planning and counting the cost [Luke 14:28] and to be as wise as serpents and as gentle as doves [Matt. 10:16]); therefore be it

Resolved, That the conclusions of the task force be set aside and a new task force established which uses the following guidelines which seek to populate the task force according the percentages of licensed lay deacon utilization nationally:

1. The task force shall be comprised **regionally**, with each region having on its team:
 - A district president who utilizes licensed lay deacons in Word and Sacrament ministry
 - A licensed lay deacon who is involved in Word and Sacrament ministry
 - A member of a congregation who is served by a licensed lay deacon in Word and Sacrament ministry
 - A supervising pastor of a licensed lay deacon who serves in Word and Sacrament ministry
 - A seminary faculty member
 - A member of the CTCR
 - The regional vice president
 - The chairman of the task force
2. These regional groups will interview and gather comprehensive data from which regional recommendations will be made to a national task force comprised of the aforementioned as well as the following:
 - The Praesidium of the Synod and the President of the Synod
 - The chairman of the Council of Presidents
 - Six district presidents, three who utilize licensed lay deacons in Word and Sacrament ministry and three who do not

and be it further

Resolved, That local districts continue their efforts to standardize and regularize the identification, training, placement, and supervision of licensed lay deacons in order to create more consistent and accountable practice across the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That the regional task forces present their findings and recommendations to the national task force no later than January 2018, resulting in the national task force presenting its findings and recommendations for the Synod's consideration no later than October 2018 for action to be taken at the 2019 LCMS convention.

Board of Directors, Northwest District; Board of Directors,
Florida-Georgia District

13-10

To Affirm Council of Presidents Implementation and Oversight of 1989 Res. 3-05B Licensed Lay Deacons

WHEREAS, The 1989 Res. 3-05B framed the licensing of district-trained (locally trained) lay deacons (LLDs) for Word and Sacrament ministry in the context of Articles V and XIV of the Augsburg Confession; and

WHEREAS, The Council of Presidents (COP) over the years has established and reviewed a useful and adaptive structure for the licensing and ecclesiastical supervision of lay deacons; and

WHEREAS, Said policies and guidelines set out by the COP (section 5 in the present COP manual) clearly uphold the Office of the Holy Ministry and its relationship to the Body of Christ, while also affirming the ministry of well-trained and supervised LLDs; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 convention commend with thanksgiving the COP for its careful and effective implementation and oversight of 1989 Res. 3-05B; and be it further

Resolved, That the policies and guidelines for licensing and supervision, etc., of LLDs as drafted in the COP manual be commended to all members of the Synod for the purpose of education and acknowledgment that our beloved Confessions are indeed being upheld in this regard; and be it finally

Resolved, That the convention affirm the ongoing training, licensing, supervision, and use of lay deacons in the respective districts of the Synod in the manner outlined by the present policies and guidelines of the COP for the up-building of Christ's Church and the care of His people.

Trinity, Utica, MI; Trinity, Lansing, MI; Marco, Marco Island, FL; King of Kings, Omaha, NE; Amazing Grace, Oxford, FL; California-Nevada-Hawaii District; Redeemer, Fresno, CA; Michigan District; Grace, Visalia, CA; Pacific Southwest District; St. John, Dublin, OH; Circuit 3, California-Nevada-Hawaii District; Messiah, Lincoln, NE; First, Hanford, CA; Grace, Monroe, MI; Prince of Peace, Orlando, FL; First, Charlotte, MI; Outer Drive Faith, Detroit, MI; Orlando West Circuit, Florida-Georgia District; The Rock, Seward, NE; Christ, Mantua OH; Our Savior, Arcadia, CA

13-11

To Encourage Continued Training and Licensing of Lay Deacons

WHEREAS, Deacons are noted in the Holy Scriptures in such passages as Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8–15; and

WHEREAS, One of those selected in Acts 6 was Stephen, the first recorded Christian martyr, being stoned to death after delivering a clear exposition of God's work of salvation through the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ (Acts 6:8–7:60); and

WHEREAS, Philip was also one chosen as a deacon in Acts 6, whom God later used to evangelize in Samaria (Acts 8:4–8) and even baptized the Ethiopian convert along the Gaza Road, then onto Azotus and Caesarea (Acts 8:26–40); and

WHEREAS, Ordained pastors supervise vicars, faculty, staff, and volunteers who serve the flock of God as extensions of the one Office of the Holy Ministry; and

WHEREAS, Pastors who supervise the work of Licensed Lay Deacons (LLDs) are well within their scope as “*episkopos*” or “*presbyteros*,” as deacons also serve as auxiliary to the one Office of the Holy Ministry; and

WHEREAS, LLDs serving under supervising pastors are doing so under the direction and blessing of the self-governing congregations; and

WHEREAS, Deacon training programs have provided a useful and even economically efficient means to equip laity to serve pastors and congregations in a variety of ministries, including cross-cultural; and

WHEREAS, Many who have received the training as an LLD have then been led to seek ordination through one of our Synod's fine seminaries; and

WHEREAS, With careful oversight by the district president, faithfully enforcing the policies and guidelines for the use of LLDs as provided in the COP manual regarding the tasks of supervising pastors, etc., there need be no concerns or debate concerning Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention again affirm and encourage the proper training and licensing of lay deacons in districts that desire to provide such training and oversight; and be it further

Resolved, That district presidents who have ecclesiastical oversight impress upon those ordained pastors who supervise LLDs the need to be diligent and faithful in their supervision; and be it further

Resolved, That LLDs who serve in geographically remote or ethnically diverse settings and are therefore without the benefit of immediate pastoral supervision be directed to seek ordination through colloquy, through the SMP, EIIT, CHS, or other appropriate routes provided by the Synod in order to continue service in that setting; and be it finally

Resolved, The Synod in convention thank the Res. 4-06A Task Force for its report.

Trinity, Utica, MI; Immanuel, Grand Rapids, MI; Circuit 35, Michigan District; Board of Directors, Michigan District; First, Hanford, CA; Grace, Monroe, MI; First, Charlotte, MI; Outer Drive Faith, Detroit, MI; Redeemer, Fresno, CA

13-12

To Support Licensed Deacons

WHEREAS, Licensed deacons are important to many congregations and essential in others; and

WHEREAS, The power in Word and Sacrament ministry is in God's Word, not ordination; and

WHEREAS, The authority to do Word and Sacrament ministry is in the call, not ordination (AC XIV); and

WHEREAS, Licensed deacons spread the Gospel and minister to the people of God; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention encourage recruitment of licensed deacons; and be it further

Resolved, That each district be encouraged to provide the training and supervision for licensed deacons; and be it finally

Resolved, That the convention thank the licensed deacons for their service.

Trinity
Republic, WA

13-13

To Affirm, Encourage, and Continue Ministry of Licensed Lay Deacons

WHEREAS, As Jesus shared the purpose of His ministry to be saving the lost, “for the Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10); and

WHEREAS, As Jesus left this world at His ascension, the primary job He gave His Church is mission work, the sharing of Jesus’ saving love with all creation: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:19–20); He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46–47); “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8); and

WHEREAS, God tells the Early Church that He wants all to be saved: “God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3b–4); “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9); and

WHEREAS, Jesus calls His Church to pray for workers: “When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field” (Matt. 9:37–38); and

WHEREAS, A list of servants and offices to guide and lead and equip and serve God’s Church is listed in Ephesians 4: “It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph. 4:11–12); and

WHEREAS, Deacons are appointed in Acts 6 to wait on tables, but the Spirit leads Philip and Stephen to spread the Good News as they baptize and teach (Acts 6–8); and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther considered those listed in Acts 6:1–6 who were appointed to assist in the food distribution to be deacons; and

WHEREAS, The ministry of deacons, contrasted to the ministry of bishops and overseers, is noted in Holy Scripture in such passages as Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8–15; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the history of the Church, God’s people have prayed for pastors to preach and teach, bring God’s sacraments, and equip God’s people for the work of ministry. However, in times of need and appropriate opportunity, others such as Origen in Jerusalem and Melancthon in Wittenberg preached and brought the sacraments to God’s people; and

WHEREAS, As Lutheran Christians who subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions, we affirm our commitment to the Augsburg Confession and Article XIV but do not see the word *ordain* in this article; and

WHEREAS, As Lutheran Christians who subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions, we read the Introduction to the Formula of Concord and see that Scripture has final authority among us (*sola Scriptura*); and

WHEREAS, While in Scripture those being called to ministry receive the laying on of hands; nevertheless, C. F. W. Walther identified ordination as a man-made rite; and

WHEREAS, Walther recognized “auxiliary/helping” offices as offices to assist ordained pastors and to further the ministry of the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, In the LCMS, ordained pastors supervise vicars, faculty, staff, and volunteers who serve the flock of God as extensions of the one Office of the Holy Ministry and help to spread the saving Gospel of Jesus; and

WHEREAS, Supervising pastors who guide the word of licensed lay deacons are well within their scope as “*episkopos*” or “*presbyteros*” as deacons also serve as extensions of the one Office of the Holy Ministry; and

WHEREAS, Licensed lay deacons serving under supervising pastors are doing so under the direction and blessing of the autonomous congregation; and

WHEREAS, Deacon training programs have provided an effective and economically efficient means to equip laity to serve pastors and congregations in a variety of ministries including small, remote, or cross-cultural congregations; and

WHEREAS, With careful oversight by the district president, faithfully enforcing the policies and guidelines for the use of licensed lay deacons as provided in the Council of Presidents Manual regarding the tasks of supervising pastors, etc., there need be no concerns or debate concerning AC XIV; and

WHEREAS, Many who have received the training as a licensed lay deacon have then been led to seek ordination through one of our Synod’s fine seminaries; and

WHEREAS, Congregations have been formed through the supervised work of licensed lay deacons—congregations which, by the grace of God, have grown and are now being served by ordained pastors; and

WHEREAS, Some congregations would need to close if the ministry of licensed lay deacons were discontinued; and

WHEREAS, Those who did not know or believe in Jesus have, by God’s grace, at least in part through the supervised work of licensed deacons, come to repentance and saving faith in Jesus so that they might be saved, and some of these believers might not know Jesus if licensed lay deacons had not been available; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention again continue, affirm, and encourage the proper training, licensing, and supervised ministry of licensed lay deacons in districts that desire to provide such training and oversight; and be it further

Resolved, That district presidents who have ecclesiastical oversight impress upon those ordained pastors who supervise licensed lay deacons to be diligent and faithful in their supervision; and be it further

Resolved, That licensed lay deacons who serve in geographically remote or ethnically diverse settings (and therefore without the benefit of immediate pastoral supervision) be helped to seek ordination through colloquy through the SMP, EIIT, CHS, or another appropriate route provided by the Synod in order to continue their service in that setting; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank the 2013 Res. 4-06A Task Force for its report, while nevertheless continuing the ministry of licensed lay deacons as an auxiliary office to help share the saving love of Jesus.

St. Mark, Flint, MI; St. John, Palmer, AK; St. John’s, Dover, DE; St. Mark, Saginaw, MI; Circuit 3, California-

Nevada-Hawaii District; Family of Christ, Imlay City, MI; Grace, Monroe, MI; Faith, Sequim, WA; Memorial, Vancouver, WA; Hope, Spokane Valley, WA; First, Fontana, CA; Pilgrim, Spokane, WA

13-14

To Confirm Continued Use of Deacons

WHEREAS, In 1989, the LCMS authorized districts to train and license deacons for Word and Sacrament ministry (1989 Res. 3-05B) when ordained clergy are unavailable; and

WHEREAS, Res. 3-05B carefully defined deacons and directed “that the title deacon be established by which a layman would be addressed while he is temporarily serving in Word and Sacrament ministry in exceptional circumstances or in emergencies”; and

WHEREAS, Deacons are a biblical office as noted in Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:1–13, where qualifications for both deacons and bishops are listed side by side; and

WHEREAS, 77 percent of districts authorize deacons to preach and provide spiritual care in their congregations, and 57 percent authorize deacons for Word and Sacrament ministry, indicating that deacons are accepted by the wider church; and

WHEREAS, Ten districts, Concordia University New York, and Concordia University Portland provide sound training based on Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, 525 men bear the title “deacon,” a number greater than six of the seven auxiliary offices combined; and

WHEREAS, Deacon programs have brought order and accountability as districts train, examine, credential, oversee, provide continuing education, and review deacon licenses annually, and as supervising pastors oversee deacons personally; and

WHEREAS, Many congregations need deacons, especially those which have trouble finding pastors when they are ethnic, small, big, remote, poor, or urban; and

WHEREAS, The need for deacons will grow in coming years as the Synod and congregations shrink as a result of the large percentage of older members; and

WHEREAS, Many partner churches in other countries train and commission men in deacon-like offices, whether by that title or another; and

WHEREAS, The three parts of deacon licensing mirror the same three parts of the “proper call” mentioned in the Augsburg Confession XIV; namely, examination by Synod appointees, call by a congregation, and ordination by representatives of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Terminating the position would hinder God’s ministry and cause great upheaval in the 77 percent of districts which use deacons; therefore be it

Resolved, That we affirm and thank God for the faithful ministry of deacons, and for the rapid growth of training programs and of licensed deacons in just 26 years; and be it further

Resolved, That licensed deacons, as practiced in the LCMS under 1989 Res. 3-05B, be confirmed by the Synod in convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod task force formed by the 2013 convention to study the ministry of deacons be thanked for their service and their report issued in 2015; and be it further

Resolved, That this convention reject the task force recommendation that the Synod revoke 1989 Wichita Res. 3-05B and terminate the position of deacon throughout the Synod (Recommendation #1); and be it finally

Resolved, That districts continue to carefully apply the detailed guidelines provided by the 1989 convention, expand training where needed, and develop the ministry of deacons to the glory of God.

Messiah, Highland, CA; First Trinity, Tonawanda, NY; Salem, Buffalo, NY; Prince of Peace, Hemet, CA; Faith, Inglewood, CA; Our Savior, Chester, CA; First, Fontana, CA; Saving Grace, Chino Valley, CA; St. Andrew’s, Laramie, WY; First, Manhattan Beach, CA; Faith, Vista, CA; Trinity, Montclair, CA

13-15

To Retain Licensed Lay Deacon Ministry

WHEREAS, The 1989 convention adopted Res. 3-05B, “To Adopt Recommendations of Lay Worker Study Committee Report as Amended”; and

WHEREAS, The Lay Worker Study Committee provided a thorough and excellent practical and theological context and content for the resolution in its report to the 1989 convention (Report R3-06, 1989 *Convention Workbook*, pp. 69–73); and

WHEREAS, The report included ways of involving the gifts of lay people (the royal priests) chosen by and from the congregation in specific congregational ministries, which reflected the theological understanding of the universal priesthood of believers (a key doctrine), the Synod’s understanding of the doctrine of the ministry, the Office of the Public Ministry, auxiliary/facilitating offices, and other positions of service; and

WHEREAS, The 1989 report and resolution were determined by the CCM to be in agreement in content and language with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The CCM in 1996 opinion Ag. 2034 with respect to 1995 Res. 3-07A concluded that the resolution “was not intended to replace or to nullify 1989 Res. 3-05B ...”; and

WHEREAS, A September 1981 report of the CTCR (*The Ministry Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*) states: “[W]hen a congregation is temporarily without a man to fill the office of the public ministry in its midst, it may ask a properly supervised teacher or lay leader to perform some functions of the office of the public ministry. ... [T]he oversight and accountability remain with the one whom the church has called and designated as a pastor and who supervises those who temporarily perform some pastoral functions. ... 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 sacraments, weddings, and funeral services should be carried out by those who hold the office of the public ministry. However, in exceptional circumstances, or in emergencies (as when the pastor is incapacitated), members of the auxiliary offices and other qualified individuals may temporarily be called upon to perform, under proper supervision, functions that are otherwise performed by the pastor.” (pp. 16, 35); and

WHEREAS, *Kirche und Amt* (*Church and Ministry* by C. F. W. Walther) states the doctrinal position of the Synod: “The pastoral ministry is the highest office in the church, and from it stem all other offices in the church (Thesis VIII),” and under Scripture proof explains: “Every other public office in the church is part of the ministry of the Word or an auxiliary office that supports the ministry, whether it be the elders ... the rulers ... or the deacons ... or whatever other offices the church may entrust to particular persons for special administration.” (cf. “*Proper Form of a Lutheran Congregation*”

Chapter III, 14 including the reference to *Chemnitz Examine II*, 13); and

WHEREAS, *The Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* clearly states the rights and privileges of the royal priests:

30. *The Original and True Possessors of All Christian Rights and Privileges*—Since the Christians are the Church, it is self-evident that they alone *originally* possess the spiritual gifts and rights which Christ has gained for, and given to, His Church. Thus St. Paul reminds all believers: “All things are yours,” 1 Cor. 3:21, 22, and Christ Himself commits to all believers the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 16:13–19; 18:17–20; John 20:22, 23, and commissions all believers to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments, Matt. 28:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23–25. Accordingly, we reject all doctrines by which this spiritual power or any part thereof is adjudged as *originally* vested in certain individuals or bodies, such as the Pope, or the bishops, or the order of the ministry, or the secular lords, or councils, or synods, etc. The officers of the Church publicly administer their offices only by virtue of delegated powers, and such administration remains under the supervision of the latter, Col. 4:17. Naturally all Christians have also the right and the duty to judge and decide matters of doctrine, not according to their own notions, of course, but according to the Word of God, 1 John 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:11; and

WHEREAS, The lay licensed deacon, who has a very particular, special, and specific ministry in the Church, is grounded not merely in the priesthood of believers but, through the Office of the Public Ministry, in the ministry of Christ and the apostles; and

WHEREAS, The use of lay workers (the royal priests) in serving the Church under a properly called pastor is clearly consonant with and not in violation of Articles V (The Ministry of the Church) and XIV (Order in the Church) of the Augsburg Confession; and

WHEREAS, The doctrine of the universal priesthood is frequently paid lip service and the scriptural emphasis that every Christian is a priest with specific priesthood obligations is not executed, thus requiring the overwhelming need and utilization of trained laymen and women to carry out the divine commission of our Lord; and

WHEREAS, According to Bylaw 5.2.3.1: “The circuit visitor shall, when requested to do so by the district president, serve as his representative in the triennial visitation of the congregations of the circuit. (a) In doing so, he should keep in mind *the glory and responsibility of the universal priesthood of all believers as it applies to the congregations*. He shall remind them that they are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people to show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9) [emphasis added]; and

WHEREAS, *Kirche und Amt*, in stating the doctrinal position of the LCMS, indicates that: “The ministry of preaching is conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of all church power, or of the keys, and by its call, as prescribed by God. The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not by divine institution but is an apostolic church ordinance and merely a public, solemn confirmation of the call” (Thesis VI of the Theses on the Ministry); and

WHEREAS, The formal doctrinal position adopted in 1851 in the *Theses on Church and Ministry* also include other helpful doctrinal theses; and

WHEREAS, *The Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* in Theses 31 and 33 clearly teaches that Office of Public Ministry is a “divine ordinance” and that “the Christians of a certain locality must apply the means of grace . . . ,” and clearly teaches that “ordination . . . is not a divine ordinance”; and

WHEREAS, A report of the CTRC, September 1981 (*The Ministry Offices, Procedures and Nomenclature*) states:

Ordination has its historical roots in the New Testament and in the church through the ages. It is a solemn ecclesiastical rite by which a

duly qualified member of the body of Christ who has accepted a valid call from the church is presented to the church as a gift of the Holy Spirit and publicly declared to be a holder of the office of the public ministry. It is a public ratification of the call and an invocation of the blessings of God upon the new minister. While the rite of ordination including the laying on of hands is not a necessity, it is to be revered as an ancient apostolic custom. In keeping with this custom, the laying on of hands of other pastors and the presence of teachers and members of the church from places other than the site of the ordainee’s immediate call is meaningful. When a man is ordained in one congregation, for example, he is recognized as a member of the public ministry of the whole confessional fellowship. Ordination as an act does not impart an additional authority that the call does not give, nor is it a sacrament” (p. 22); and

WHEREAS, While the Office of the Public Ministry is a divine ordinance, *ordination is de jure humano* (by human right, order, or arrangement only), an excellent and commendable practice, and not *de jure divino* (by divine right, law, or requirement). To be clear, ordination is not a sacrament and is not a divine ordinance; and

WHEREAS, The 2013 convention adopted Res. 4-06A “to resolve questions about the service of licensed lay deacons serving congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with the Word and Sacraments of Christ” (the matter of the 1989 Res. 3-05B); and

WHEREAS, The 4-06A Task Force on July 9, 2015, submitted its report and recommendations, which in effect nullifies and replaces 1989 Res. 3-05B; and

WHEREAS, While attempts were made in 2001 to rescind 1989 Res. 3-05B, the 2001 convention adopted Res. 3-08B: “*Resolved*, That the Synod authorize its districts to continue training lay deacons as directed by the spirit of the 1989 Wichita Res. 3-05B in which trained lay ministers serve under the supervision of an ordained pastor; . . . and . . . *Resolved*, That this convention rescind 1995 St. Louis convention Res. 3-07A (requiring such licensed laymen to complete a seminary program for ordination); and be it further *Resolved*, That we pray the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest (Matt. 9:37–38)”; and

WHEREAS, The 4-06A Task Force Report and Recommendations are theologically in error, controversial, and divisive in at least the following particulars:

1. The royal priesthood of believers is limited to “their daily lives and vocations” and “one’s daily vocation in the world” as if they are not directly involved in the worship, mission, and ministry of a Christian congregation (the royal priesthood), including exercising their priesthood as the holder of all church power by the very calling of pastors or “entrust[ing] to particular persons for special administration” or for that matter, being the particular one (royal priest) entrusted with a specific ministry under a called pastor;
2. Ordination, which is *de jure humano*, is being considered necessary and required for ministry;
3. While declaring not to set in opposition the priesthood of believers and the Office of the [Public] Ministry, the report and recommendations in fact clearly does so;
4. Declaring lay licensed deacons “the *de facto* pastors of LCMS congregations” when in fact, while serving under a pastor and carrying out some of the *functions* of a pastor, a lay licensed deacon is considered in the Church *not a de facto* or a *de jure divino* pastor;
5. Implying that a lay licensed deacon cannot proclaim *the pure Gospel*;
6. The “threefold perspective”—examination, congregational call, ordination—is all considered required although the “ordination” is only *de jure humano* (though salutary for good order); the “examination” is *de jure humano* (full-time seminary-prepared pastor, “examined by faculty,” etc.) unless it is only understood to be the scriptural qualifications for the office of a pastor or deacon. Only

the “congregational call” is *de jure divino* (that is, divinely ordered and arranged). It is only the call (by the congregation or parish) that makes a pastor. This is of the essence. It certainly is not transmitted from pastor to pastor nor is it by some episcopal or hierarchical authority;

7. The misidentification and misunderstanding of the “unresolved controversy” and “division”; and

WHEREAS, The report and recommendations demonstrate that the task force is not aware of or does not recognize the exponential increase of the “financial, geographical or demographic” issues, the cultural conditions, challenges and ongoing change in the LCMS and the USA with the increased mission opportunities to proclaim the Gospel and bring Christ to the lost; and

WHEREAS, 1989 Res. 3-05A had the foresight to establish this special ministry and help for the Office of the Public Ministry in these challenging days, reflecting an understanding of the theological position of “whatever other offices the church may entrust to particular persons for special administration” (*Kirche und Amt*); therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention give thanks to the 4-06A Task Force for its work, dismiss and consider the report as theologically and practically inadequate in light of the mission of Christ in the world, and decline any resolution to adopt the proposals; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 convention affirm 1989 Res. 3-05B, thereby continuing the lay licensed deacon ministry as useful and necessary and as a viable solution to the mission challenges and issues facing the Church in these last days; and be it further

Resolved, That any in the Church who consider our theological position of Church and ministry, as set forth in *Kirche Und Amt* or the *Brief Statement* to be in error, follow the right of brotherly dissent as delineated in Bylaw section 1.8, “Dissent”; and be it finally

Resolved, That all the ordained and commissioned servants and all the royal priests be moved to participate in God’s mission (*Missio Dei*) with greater joy, fervor, and enthusiasm.

Gloria Dei, Houston, TX; Salem, Tomball TX

13-16

To Retain Licensed Lay Deacon Ministry

WHEREAS, The 1989 LCMS convention adopted Res. 3-05B, “To Adopt Recommendations of Lay Worker Study Committee Report as Amended”; and

WHEREAS, The Lay Worker Study Committee provided a thorough and excellent practical and theological context and content for the resolution in its report to the 1989 convention (Report R3-06, 1989 *Convention Workbook*, pp. 69–73); and

WHEREAS, The report included ways of involving the gifts of laypeople (the royal priests) chosen by and from the congregation in specific congregational ministries, which reflected the theological understanding of the universal priesthood of believers (a key doctrine), our Synod’s understanding of the doctrine of the ministry, the Office of the Public Ministry, auxiliary/facilitating offices, and other positions of service; and

WHEREAS, The 1989 report and resolution were determined by the CCM to be in agreement in content and language with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The CCM in 1996 opinion Ag. 2034 with respect to 1995 Res. 3-07A concluded that the resolution “was not intended to replace or to nullify 1989 Res. 3-05B”; and

WHEREAS, A September 1981 report of the LCMS CTRC (*The Ministry Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*) states: “When a congregation is temporarily without a man to fill the office of the public ministry in its midst, it may ask a properly supervised teacher or lay leader to perform some functions of the office of the public ministry. . . . The oversight and accountability remain with the one whom the church has called and designated as a pastor and who supervises those who temporarily perform some pastoral functions. . . . 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 sacraments, weddings, and funeral services should be carried out by those who hold the office of the public ministry. However, in exceptional circumstances, or in emergencies (as when the pastor is incapacitated), members of the auxiliary offices and other qualified individuals may temporarily be called upon to perform, under proper supervision, functions that are otherwise performed by the pastor” (pp. 16, 35); and

WHEREAS, *Kirche und Amt* (*Church and Ministry*, C. F. W. Walther) states the doctrinal position of the Synod: “The pastoral ministry is the highest office in the church, and from it stem all other offices in the church” (Thesis VIII of the *Theses on the Ministry*), and under Scripture proof explains: “Every other public office in the church is part of the ministry of the Word or an auxiliary office that supports the ministry, whether it be the elders . . . the rulers . . . or the deacons . . . or whatever other offices the church may entrust to particular persons for special administration” (cf. *Proper Form of a Lutheran Congregation*, chapter III, 14, including the reference to *Chemnitz Examine II*, 13); and

WHEREAS, *The Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* in Thesis 30 clearly states the rights and privileges of the royal priests:

30. *The Original and True Possessors of All Christian Rights and Privileges*—Since the Christians are the Church, it is self-evident that they alone *originally* possess the spiritual gifts and rights which Christ has gained for, and given to, His Church. Thus St. Paul reminds all believers: “All things are yours,” 1 Cor. 3:21, 22, and Christ Himself commits to all believers the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 16:13–19; 18:17–20; John 20:22, 23, and commissions all believers to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments, Matt. 28:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23–25. Accordingly, we reject all doctrines by which this spiritual power or any part thereof is adjudged as *originally* vested in certain individuals or bodies, such as the Pope, or the bishops, or the order of the ministry, or the secular lords, or councils, or synods, etc. The officers of the Church publicly administer their offices only by virtue of delegated powers, and such administration remains under the supervision of the latter, Col. 4:17. Naturally all Christians have also the right and the duty to judge and decide matters of doctrine, not according to their own notions, of course, but according to the Word of God, 1 John 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:11;

and

WHEREAS, The licensed lay deacon, who has a very particular, special, and specific ministry in the church, is grounded not merely in the priesthood of believers but also, through the Office of the Public Ministry, in the ministry of Christ and the apostles; and

WHEREAS, The use of lay workers (the royal priests) in serving the church under a properly called pastor is clearly consonant with and not in violation of Articles V (The Ministry of the Church) and XIV (Order in the Church) of the Augsburg Confession; and

WHEREAS, According to Bylaw 5.2.3.1: “The circuit visitor shall, when requested to do so by the district president, serve as his representative in the triennial visitation of the congregations of the circuit.

(a) In doing so, he should keep in mind *the glory and responsibility of the universal priesthood of all believers as it applies to the congregations*. He shall remind them that they are ‘a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people to show for the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light’ (1 Pet. 2:9)” (emphasis added). The doctrine of the universal priesthood is frequently paid lip service and the scriptural emphasis that every Christian is a priest with specific priesthood obligations is not executed, thus requiring the overwhelming need and utilization of trained laymen and women to carry out the divine commission of our Lord; and

WHEREAS, *Kirche und Amt*, in stating the doctrinal position of the LCMS, indicates that “the ministry of preaching is conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of all church power, or of the keys, and by its call, as prescribed by God. The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not by divine institution but is an apostolic church ordinance and merely a public, solemn confirmation of the call” (Thesis VI of the *Theses on the Ministry*); and

WHEREAS, The formal doctrinal position adopted in 1851 in the *Theses on Church and Ministry* also include other helpful doctrinal theses; and

WHEREAS, *The Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* in Theses 31 and 33 clearly teaches that Office of Public Ministry is a “divine ordinance” and that “the Christians of a certain locality must apply the means of grace” and clearly teaches that “ordination ... is not a divine ordinance”; and

WHEREAS, A September 1981 CTCR report (*The Ministry Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*, p. 22) states:

Ordination has its historical roots in the New Testament and in the church through the ages. It is a solemn ecclesiastical rite by which a duly qualified member of the body of Christ who has accepted a valid call from the church is presented to the church as a gift of the Holy Spirit and publicly declared to be a holder of the office of the public ministry. It is a public ratification of the call and an invocation of the blessings of God upon the new minister. While the rite of ordination including the laying on of hands is not a necessity, it is to be revered as an ancient apostolic custom. In keeping with this custom, the laying on of hands of other pastors and the presence of teachers and members of the church from places other than the site of the ordainee’s immediate call is meaningful. When a man is ordained in one congregation, for example, he is recognized as a member of the public ministry of the whole confessional fellowship. Ordination as an act does not impart an additional authority that the call does not give, nor is it a sacrament;

and

WHEREAS, While the Office of the Public Ministry is a divine ordinance, *ordination is de jure humano* (by human right, order, or arrangement only), an excellent and commendable practice, and not *de jure divino* (by divine right, law, or requirement). To be clear, ordination is not a sacrament and is not a divine ordinance; and

WHEREAS, The 2013 convention adopted Res. 4-06A, “To Resolve Questions about the Service of Licensed Lay Deacons” (the matter of the 1989 Res. 3-05B); and

WHEREAS, The 4-06A Task Force on July 9, 2015, submitted its report and recommendations, which in effect nullifies and replaces 1989 Res. 3-05B; and

WHEREAS, While attempts were made in 2001 to rescind 1989 Res. 3-05B, the 2001 convention adopted Res. 3-08B: “*Resolved*, That the Synod authorize its districts to continue training lay deacons as directed by the spirit of the 1989 Wichita Res. 3-05B in which trained lay ministers serve under the supervision of an ordained pastor; ... and ... *Resolved*, That this convention rescind 1995 St. Louis convention Res. 3-07A (requiring such licensed laymen to complete

a seminary program for ordination); and be it further *Resolved*, That we pray the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest (Matt. 9:37–38)”; and

WHEREAS, The 4-06A Task Force Report and Recommendations are theologically in error, controversial, and divisive in at least the following particulars:

1. The royal priesthood of believers is limited to “their daily lives and vocations” and “one’s daily vocation in the world” as if they are not directly involved in the worship, mission, and ministry of a Christian congregation (the royal priesthood), including exercising their priesthood as the holder of all church power by the very calling of pastors or “entrust[ing] to particular persons for special administration” or for that matter, being the particular one (royal priest) entrusted with a specific ministry under a called pastor;
2. Ordination, which is *de jure humano*, is being considered necessary and required for ministry;
3. While declaring not to set in opposition the priesthood of believers and the Office of the [Public] Ministry, the report and recommendations in fact clearly do so;
4. Declaring lay licensed deacons “the *de facto* pastors of LCMS congregations” when in fact, while serving under a pastor and carrying out some of the *functions* of a pastor, a lay licensed deacon is considered in the church *not a de facto* or a *de jure divino* pastor;
5. Implying that a lay licensed deacon cannot proclaim *the pure Gospel*;
6. The “threefold perspective”—examination, congregational call, ordination—is all considered required although the “ordination” is only *de jure humano* (though salutary for good order); the “examination” is *de jure humano* (full-time seminary-prepared pastor, “examined by faculty,” etc.) unless it is only understood to be the scriptural qualifications for the office of a pastor or deacon. Only the “congregational call” is *de jure divino*—that is, divinely ordered and arranged. It is only the call (by the congregation or parish) that makes a pastor. This is of the essence. It certainly is not transmitted from pastor to pastor nor is it by some episcopal or hierarchical authority;
7. The misidentification and misunderstanding of the “unresolved controversy” and “division;” and

WHEREAS, The report and recommendations demonstrate that the task force seems unaware of or does not recognize the exponential increase of the “financial, geographical or demographic” issues, the cultural conditions, challenges and ongoing change in the LCMS and the USA with *the increased mission opportunities to proclaim the Gospel and bringing Christ to the lost*; and

WHEREAS, 1989 Res. 3-05A had the foresight to establish this special ministry and help for the Office of the Public Ministry in these challenging days, reflecting an understanding of the theological position of “whatever other offices the church may entrust to particular persons for special administration” (*Kirche und Amt*); therefore be it *Resolved*, That the 2016 Synod convention decline any resolution to adopt the proposals of the Res. 4-06A Task Force; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 convention affirm 1989 Res. 3-05B, thereby continuing the licensed lay deacon ministry as useful and necessary and as a viable solution to the mission challenges and issues facing the church in these last days; and be it finally

Resolved, That all the ordained and commissioned servants and all the royal priests be moved to participate in God’s mission (*Missio Dei*) with greater joy, fervor, and enthusiasm.

Board of Directors, Texas District; King of Kings, Round Rock, TX

13-17

To Retain Office of Lay Deacon for Sake of Mission of the Church

WHEREAS, A growing number of congregations dotting the landscape of the LCMS struggle to have an ordained pastor serve them in a Word and Sacrament ministry, and the LCMS for decades has answered those needs by providing lay deacons to serve in that capacity; and

WHEREAS, There is an expressed concern that our lay deacon ministry is in conflict with Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession which requires those serving in a Word and Sacrament ministry to be “rightly called,” even though other LCMS conventions in 1989 and 2004 have endorsed their service; and

WHEREAS, The 2013 Res. 4-06A Task Force Report identified the three challenges impacting our LCMS congregations’ ability to have an ordained pastor serve them, including financial challenges, geographical challenges, and demographic challenges; and

WHEREAS, There are other even more significant challenges impacting our ability to have Word and Sacrament ministry in all places where the Lord has called us to serve, namely these:

1. We in the LCMS find ourselves living in the third largest mission field in the world—and the mission is growing to the point that now 80 percent of our neighbors no longer attend worship services and are part of the mission we are called to serve.
2. We live in a post-Constantinian church age, meaning that much of the structure created to serve a church culture up until recent times struggles to engage the culture that remains outside our sanctuaries and Christendom; and

WHEREAS, The Res. 4-06A Task Force Report does not identify these last two challenges that impact the future of our church but presents a solution that will in effect restrict our church body from providing Word and Sacrament ministry to our present churches and keep us from responding to the actual mission need; and

WHEREAS, Augsburg XIV understands that “rite vocatus” involves three aspects:

- Examination in terms of teaching ability and lifestyle
- Call by a congregation
- Ordination of the candidate and his call by the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has defined its understanding of “rite vocatus” to fit the human structures of a Constantinian church model that struggles to exist in the unchurched mission culture that now has overtaken the United States; and

WHEREAS, The New Testament era, which our culture is replicating more and more, met the expansive mission need by opening the door to the involvement of others, such as deacons like Philip whom the Church consecrated through the laying on of hands and who was then used by the Holy Spirit in a powerful way to bring the Gospel and the Sacrament of Baptism to the Ethiopian official; and

WHEREAS, The church leaders in Jerusalem opened the door to the Antioch Church to be a missionary-sending church by removing restrictions at a time in which the Holy Spirit was opening doors to a vast mission field; and

WHEREAS, At the very time when we need more harvest workers, we have a gifted laity well-placed to serve both the congregations who presently lack an ordained pastor and congregations who have a need for a licensed lay deacon to serve; and

WHEREAS, The Lord of the Church gives the Church the freedom and wisdom to organize itself to serve the mission and ministry needs in the age in which it serves; therefore be it

Resolved, That our congregations continue to encourage the people to answer the Lord’s call for harvest field workers and prepare themselves for service as ministers of religion, ordained and commissioned; and be it further

Resolved, Congregations encourage our laity to receive theological education and formation through our Concordia universities and seminaries to prepare themselves for service in the Church; and be it further

Resolved, Our Concordia universities presently offering theological training for the laity work together to standardize all of the education opportunities for diaconate training to ensure a uniformity of education synodwide and provide a report demonstrating a unified curriculum to the Council of Presidents by September 2018; and be it further

Resolved, That we can be faithful to the stipulations of Article XIV in this missionary age by

- providing theological training for those affirmed by their congregations to serve as lay deacons;
- encouraging congregations to lay hands on those among them they have affirmed and thereby call or consecrate lay people to serve in Word and Sacrament ministries;
- asking our LCMS districts to oversee a ministry of support, encouragement, and accountability for our lay deacons; and
- in these ways honor our mutual understanding of what it means to be “rightly called” (AC XIV);

and be it finally

Resolved, That we retain all lay deacons presently serving in Word and Sacrament ministry under the supervision of an ordained pastor and licensed by the district in which they serve, while we expand the number of lay deacons to serve a variety of needs according to the needs of the Church and the gifting of the Holy Spirit.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

13-18

To Affirm and Expand Established Practice of Licensed Lay Deacons

WHEREAS, Deacons are clearly mentioned in Holy Scripture in 1 Timothy 3:8–15 and Titus 1; and

WHEREAS, Deacons in the Holy Scriptures assist in the food distribution (Acts 6) as well as evangelize, preach (Acts 8:4–8), and even baptize (Acts 8:26–40); and

WHEREAS, The CTCR (as illustrated in the 1981 CTCR document, “The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, Nomenclature”) already has recognized the office of deacon as an auxiliary office; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS Res. 4-06A Task Force advocates termination of convention-supported and established LCMS practice through the following recommendations:

- All trained, ecclesiastically supervised licensed lay deacon ministry be phased out by January 2018
- Deacons older than 55 be ordained through a regional colloquy process
- Deacons younger than 55 apply and enter the specific ministry pastor (SMP) training at seminary
- Congregations served by licensed lay deacons (a) become multipoint ministries served by one pastor, (b) be served by inactive and retired pastors, (c) be assisted by the Synod to cover the cost for SMP training for any deacons needing financial assistance;

and

WHEREAS, A sizable number of LCMS altar and pulpit fellowship churches around the world are not phasing out the service of

their deacons but rather are expanding their training and use where needed; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS colloquy process is currently not limited to applicants over 55; and

WHEREAS, Congregations have long benefited by the guidance of district presidents as they walk together using every scriptural and confessional means to steward the mysteries of God; and

WHEREAS, A Synod resolution removing licensed lay deacons as a valid option damages congregational autonomy and the ecclesiastical authority of district presidents, and further threatens their ability to ensure reception of the Word and Sacraments in some congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That district presidents following 1989 Res. 3-05B be commended for their faithful oversight of licensed lay deacons and, where abuses are evident, that district presidents resolve such abuses in accordance with their office; and be it further

Resolved, That district presidents who have ecclesiastical oversight continue to receive regular reports from supervisors of licensed lay deacons regarding specific ministry duties of licensed lay deacons; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention again affirm and continue the proper training and licensing of deacons within districts that need and desire such training and oversight.

Board of Directors
Southeastern District

13-19

To Affirm Continued Use of Deacons in LCMS

Rationale

In 1989, the LCMS authorized districts to train and license deacons for Word (preaching) and Sacrament ministry (1989 Res. 3-05B). Since the Synod in its wisdom approved Res. 3-05B, deacons have provided significant service to the Church, districts, and congregations. Moreover, diaconal ministry has developed well in the LCMS. Deacons have been responsibly used in many and various contexts, and deacons are well established in many congregations and districts. However, in spite of the blessings and benefits of these diaconal servants, some in the Synod have reservations about their continued existence. Consequently, and in response to 2013 Res. 4-06A (“To Address Questions Re Service of Licensed Lay Deacons”), the Res. 4-06A Task Force was formed to study the appropriate and continued use of this biblical office in the LCMS. The same task force produced a report in 2015, and among its recommendations is that the Synod in convention essentially revoke the 1989 Res. 3-05B, thereby terminating the position of deacon throughout the Synod (Recommendation 1, pp. 15ff.).

The task force’s report proposes other recommendations (numbers 2–8) that call for further and extensive support of various ministries already in use, along with naming a new office of “Evangelist” in the LCMS. These recommendations are commendable and not in question. Nevertheless, the task force’s proposal to eliminate the valid and approved use of deacons by districts and congregations, a usage established by a convention of this Synod, is to be rejected for the following reasons.

First, deacons were clearly present in the New Testament church and their existence attested to in the New Testament Scriptures. See, for example, 1 Timothy 3:1–13 and Philippians 1:1, where qualifications for both deacons and bishops are noted side by side. Scripture is

the norm and guide for doctrine and practice in the LCMS. Our Lord, in His own words, promises workers for the harvest field. Deacons are among this distinct promise as the Church seeks, under God’s Lordship, to nourish the flock (Acts 6:1–7) and reach the lost (Acts 8:26–40). In practice, God’s Word is to be our guide when it comes to the full employ of God’s rich gifts to His Church for all time and today in our post-Christian Western world context.

Second, diaconal ministry supports pastoral ministry. Deacons do not diminish the office of the pastor. Deacons serve the Church and serve pastors in their ministry to God’s people. In fact, the three parts of deacon licensing practiced by LCMS districts is congruent with the three-part construct of the “proper call” given in Augsburg Confession XIV—namely, examination by Synod appointees, call by a congregation, and ordination by representatives of the Synod. What’s more, deacons are under constant review by their supervising pastors and district presidents. In other words, the office of deacon is linked to the office of pastor in ways more accountable than most of our pastors, commissioned ministers, and auxiliary workers in the Synod.

Third, deacons are widely used by churches in the LCMS. Of the Synod’s 35 districts, 77 percent use deacons in some form or another. Ten districts actually train deacons, some using programs established for this express purpose through Concordia University, Portland and Concordia College—New York. Equally impressive is that 27 districts have deacons preaching in their congregations while 20 districts have deacons serving in Word and Sacrament settings. The Eastern District, for example, has 13 deacons, 12 of whom serve in Word and Sacrament ministries in a variety of settings and needs. Deacon programs have in fact brought order and accountability to the districts that use them. These districts intentionally train, examine, credential, oversee, provide continuing education, and review deacon licenses annually.

Fourth, deacons have been a blessing to the Church. According to the Res. 4-06A Task Force Report, 525 men currently bear the title deacon in our Synod, a number greater than any other auxiliary office (deaconess, director of parish ministry, director of family life ministry, director of Christian outreach, parish assistant) with the exception of directors of Christian education (617). Since 1989, the increase in the need for deacons is evidenced by their increase in numbers. The number of deacons today is nearly 400 percent greater than the number of “lay ministers” (135) of concern at the 1989 Wichita convention when diaconal ministry and use of the title deacon was approved by the LCMS. Deacons are valued and valuable to the Church. The increase from lay ministers in 1989 to deacons in 2015 is a telling sign that congregations welcome the use of deacons. In many places, deacons have served longer in individual churches than young pastors and provide more continuity and practical insight in ministry to the benefit the congregations. Deacons are especially helpful in churches not served by seminary-trained pastors. Experience has shown that churches have trouble finding pastors when they are ethnic, small, big, remote, poor, or urban. Deacons truly fill the gap.

Fifth, deacons are offered to all congregations in all places and circumstances at the discretion and supervision of duly elected ecclesiastical supervisors. The need for deacons will grow, not decline, in the coming years. Many congregations across the country currently are experiencing decline even as the size of the Synod shrinks. More congregations will not be able to afford full-time pastors. In effect, we will face a need for more pastors than our seminaries provide, a growing disparity of need over seminary-trained Master of Divinity pastors. Nevertheless, it is incumbent for the Synod to provide workers to supply Word and Sacrament nourishment for all its

congregations in light of the words of our Lord, “Feed My lambs ... take care of My sheep” (John 21:15–16). Thankfully, the Synod has provided additional means of sending workers into the field—Colloquy, DELTO, SMP, EIIT, etc. Still, it has been said, the Synod is in irreversible decline. Districts, it should also be pointed out, indeed continue to do their share in providing pastoral care to congregations challenged by economic and demographic shifts—encouraging dual/multi-site pastoral arrangements, advising congregations to merge when appropriate, promoting worker-priest vocations, engaging the retired and inactive in long-term interim pastoral settings—and still, districts are hard-pressed to keep pace with congregations in need of Word and Sacrament ministry. Today, the number of congregations served by deacons is somewhere between 250 and 350. That number will swell, and with it, the opportunity of leading men to our seminaries for enhanced training. We need to continue the practice of offering deacons as an option to congregations calling for Word and Sacrament nourishment when a pastor is not available.

Therefore, because Scripture affirms diaconal ministry as a blessing from God and does not deny the Church their service and ministry but, in fact, upholds it; and because diaconal ministry, as implemented in our districts, evidences the tripartite understanding of the “proper call” expressed in the Augsburg Confession; and because diaconal ministry is already widely used in our church and under the care of ecclesiastical supervisors and, as such, has been an evidenced blessing to the Church; and because diaconal ministry is already well integrated and accepted in many congregations and districts; and because churches and ministries in our fellowship, no matter how many or how few, are to be provided and not denied Word and Sacrament ministry as directed by our Lord, the following memorial is presented to the 2016 LCMS convention.

Proposed Action

WHEREAS, The 1989 LCMS Convention in Wichita passed Res. 3-05B “To Adopt Recommendations of Lay Worker Study Committee Report”; and

WHEREAS, Res. 3-05B implemented in the LCMS “that the title deacon be established by which a layman would be addressed while he is temporarily serving in Word and Sacrament ministry in exceptional circumstances or in emergencies” (Section B “Nomenclature,” paragraph 4); and

WHEREAS, The Synod upholds Holy Scripture as the sole norm of all Christian doctrine and practice (Constitution Art. II); and

WHEREAS, Deacons were clearly present in New Testament church life, and their work was attested to in the New Testament Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Phil. 1:1; Acts 6:1–7; 8:26–40); and

WHEREAS, Many deacons have blessed the ministry of congregations and districts and continue to do so where they serve, particularly in a post-Christian Western context, where due to economics, demographics, and location, a growing number of congregations are in need of Synod-supervised Word and Sacrament ministry augmenting the pastoral office; and

WHEREAS, Among partner churches of the LCMS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana (ELCG), Japan Lutheran Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB), Lutheran Church—Canada (LC–C), and The American Association of Lutheran Churches (TAALC) include the use of specially selected, trained, and supervised deacons to assist their congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention and throughout the Synod give all praise and thanks to the Lord of the Church for all His gifts to the churches and laborers in His harvest field; and be it further

Resolved, That diaconal ministry in the LCMS, as implemented in 1989 Wichita Res. 3-05B, be affirmed, and deacons be acknowledged as gifts of God to His Church; and be it further

Resolved, That Recommendation 1 of the Res. 4-06A Task Force report (pp. 19 ff.) be returned with no further action to the task force with thanks; and be it further

Resolved, That the Res. 4-06A Task Force be thanked for its work in reminding our church of its great and humble need to turn to the Lord for His gifts in sending laborers into His harvest field; and be it finally

Resolved, That Recommendation numbers 2–8 of the task force report be commended for further study with subsequent and timely implementation to the Council of Presidents and in turn, as deemed necessary, to appropriate Synod entities for study.

Board of Directors
Eastern District

13-20

To Use Ministry of Licensed Lay Deacons to Help Spread the Gospel

WHEREAS, Jesus shares the purpose of His ministry to be saving the lost: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10); and

WHEREAS, The primary job Jesus gives His Church is mission work, the sharing of His saving love with all creation. “Therefore *go and make disciples of all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:19–20). He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and *repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*” (Luke 24:46–47, emphasis added). “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and *you will be My witnesses* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, God tells the Early Church that He wants all to be saved: “God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3b–4). “The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9); and

WHEREAS, Jesus calls His Church to pray for workers: “When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field’” (Matt. 9:36–38, emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, Deacons are appointed in Acts 6 to wait on tables, but the Holy Spirit leads Philip and Stephen to spread the Good News as they also baptize and teach (Acts 6–8); and

WHEREAS, The ministry of deacons, distinguished from the ministry of bishops and overseers, is noted in Holy Scripture in such passages as Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:1–15; and

WHEREAS, In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul instructs Pastor Timothy to train others for ministry: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others”; and

WHEREAS, Supervising pastors who guide the work of licensed lay deacons are well within their scope as “*episkopos*” or “*presbuteiros*” as they supervise licensed lay deacons; and

WHEREAS, As Lutheran Christians who subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions, we affirm our commitment to the Augsburg Confession and Article XIV, but do not see the word *ordain* in this article. But, as we read the Introduction to the Formula of Concord and see that Scripture has final authority among us (*sola Scriptura*); and

WHEREAS, Congregations have been formed through the supervised work of licensed lay deacons, congregations that by the grace of God have grown and are now being served by ordained pastors; and

WHEREAS, the chart included in Appendix A of the Resolution 4-06A Task Force Report indicated that, in the respective district presidents’ opinion, 115 congregations of the Synod presently “served by a L[icensed] L[ay] D[eacon] would be unable to survive without the services of the LLD” (Resolution 4-06A Task Force Report, p. 31).

WHEREAS, Most important, those who did not know or believe in Jesus have, by God’s grace, at least in part through the supervised work of licensed deacons, come to repentance and saving faith in Jesus so that they might be saved, and some of these believers might not know Jesus if licensed deacons had not been available; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention again continue, affirm, and encourage the proper training, licensing, and supervised ministry of licensed lay deacons in districts that desire to provide such training and oversight; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod develop a plan to make ordination more accessible to those licensed lay deacons who would like to seek ordination through residential seminary education, through colloquy through the SMP, EIIT, CHS, or other appropriate route provided by the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, The Synod in convention continue the ministry of licensed lay deacons as an auxiliary office to help share the saving love of Jesus.

Board of Directors, Northwest District; Board of Directors,
Florida-Georgia District

13-21

To Establish Subordinate Office of Deacon to Participate in Preaching and Administration of Sacraments

WHEREAS, In the New Testament, those in the Office of the Ministry are called pastors (shepherds), bishops (overseers), and presbyters (elders), as in 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9; and 1 Peter 5:1–3; and

WHEREAS, The office of deacon in Scripture is differentiated from the office of bishop (overseer) in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Philippians 1:1; and

WHEREAS, The apostles established subordinate offices in ministry in response to need to support the Office of the Ministry in Acts 6:1–6; and

WHEREAS, C. F. W. Walther in *Church and Ministry* (trans. J. T. Mueller) acknowledged these subordinate offices saying, “Therefore, in scripture the incumbents of the ministerial office are called elders, bishops, rulers [*Vorsteher*], stewards, and the like, and the incumbents of subordinate offices are called deacons, that is, servants, not only of God but of the congregation and the bishop” (p. 289); and

WHEREAS, Walther in *Church and Ministry* says of such subordinate offices, “Every other public office in the church is part of the

ministry of the Word or an auxiliary office that supports the ministry, ... for they take over a part of the ministry of the Word and support the pastoral office” (pp. 289–90); and

WHEREAS, In support of this, Walther in *Church and Ministry* quotes Martin Chemnitz, who said regarding Acts 6, “When the number of disciples increased, they entrusted the part of their ministry dealing with alms to others, whom they called deacons or servants. ... This origin of ministerial grades and orders in the apostolic church shows the cause, reason, purpose and use of these grades and orders. According to the size of the congregation, the various ministerial functions thereby were to be performed more readily, more rightly, more diligently, and with greater order and becoming dignity to the edification of the church” (pp. 296–97); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church Father Johann Gerhard recognized that deacons in the Scriptures participated in the preaching and administration of the Sacraments, saying, “In the end those deacons were commissioned also with the ordinary duty of teaching (from which also those whom Acts 6 mentions were not simply excluded, though they were chiefly in charge of the tables), so that they, joined to the presbyters, preached the Word together with them, administered the Sacraments, visited the sick, etc. In this way, they were made teachers of a lower order in the church. Accordingly, in Phil. 1:1 deacons are joined with bishops or presbyters; and in 1 Tim. 3:8, after the apostle had described the virtues of a bishop, he adds the things that are required of deacons, that is, in ministers of a lower order” (“On the Ministry: Part I,” *Theological Commonplaces*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes [CPH 2012], p. 40); and

WHEREAS, Gerhard notes that this continued to be the case in the Early Church as well, citing both Early Church Fathers Justin and Jerome (“On the Ministry: Part II,” *Theological Commonplaces*, p. 47); and

WHEREAS, Gerhard notes this provided support to the bishops and presbyters (pastors) in the Office of the Ministry “in order to take their place and alleviate their labors” (*Theological Commonplaces*, p. 47); and

WHEREAS, In the Early Church, the office of deacon served under the direct oversight of the bishop as is evidenced in this passage from Early Church Father Ignatius: “See that ye all follow the bishop, even as Christ Jesus does the Father, and the presbytery as ye would the apostles. Do ye also reverence the deacons, as those that carry out [through their office] the appointment of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. ... It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize, or to offer, or to present sacrifice, or to celebrate a love-feast. But that which seems good to him, is also well-pleasing to God, that everything ye do may be secure and valid.” (Ignatius, *Epistle to the Smyrneans*, in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, vol. 1 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, p. 232); and

WHEREAS, 1989 Res. 3-05B approved the use of laymen for preaching and administering the Sacraments on a provisional basis through licensing by the districts and did not establish a regular subordinate office of deacon; and

WHEREAS, The Res. 4-06A Task Force has noted that congregations are faced with increasing financial, geographic, and demographic challenges that make it difficult to provide for ministry needs with ordained pastors; and

WHEREAS, Districts have already invested in and established training programs for the licensing of lay deacons, such that as of July 2014 the task force reported that 276 were serving in a supervised

capacity to preach and administer the Sacraments across the LCMS and a total of 525 are serving in a variety of assisting roles in ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod establish the office of deacon as a subordinate or auxiliary office of preaching and administration of the Sacraments in the church under the oversight of the pastoral office; and be it further

Resolved, That to minimize the financial burden upon congregations needing the services of deacons, the district training and licensing programs continue to be utilized for the raising up of such men for ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That those currently serving as licensed lay deacons and all subsequently trained to be deacons be called by their respective congregations into this office in accord with Augsburg Confession Article XIV; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod thank the Res. 3-06A Task Force for its work.

Board of Directors, Northwest District; Board of Directors,
Florida-Georgia District

13-22

To Affirm Use of Licensed Lay Deacons as Expression of Partnership between Office of Ministry and Priesthood of Believers

WHEREAS, There exists a blessed partnership in the ministry of the Gospel between the priesthood of believers and those called to the Office of the Ministry; and

WHEREAS, The apostle Peter affirms the priesthood of all believers, establishing that all are called to “proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness” (1 Pet. 2:9); and

WHEREAS, The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope quotes from the words of Jesus in Matt. 18:19–20, where He says, “If two of you agree on earth,” to affirm that Jesus “grants the power of the keys principally and without mediation to the church”¹; and

WHEREAS, Augsburg Confession XXVIII defines the power of the keys in this way: “According to the gospel the power of the keys or of the bishops is a power and command of God to preach the gospel, to forgive or retain sin, and to administer and distribute the sacraments”²; and

WHEREAS, C. F. W. Walther’s *Church and Ministry* quotes Luther to affirm this, noting that not only does this power belong to the whole church but to each individual believer, saying that “the keys belong to the whole communion of Christians and to everyone who is a member of that communion, and this pertains not only to their possession but also their use and whatever else there may be”³; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther cautioned regarding the use preaching and administration of the sacraments in his treatise *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, saying, “However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. (For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called)”⁴; and

WHEREAS, Augsburg Confession XIV likewise says, “No one should publicly preach, teach, or administer the sacraments unless properly called”⁵; and

WHEREAS, Christ has given the Office of the Ministry for this purpose: “He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11–12); and

WHEREAS, C. F. W. Walther’s sources cited in *Church and Ministry* affirm, “There can be no doubt that in an emergency, when no duly called pastor can be obtained, every Christian has the power and is permitted, according to God’s Word and out of Christian love, to attend to the ministry of the Word by preaching the divine word and administering the sacraments”⁶; and

WHEREAS, The same source cited in C. F. W. Walther’s *Church and Ministry* affirms that even this is a “true and due” call of God, saying, “In such emergencies a Christian should not be troubled about being a busybody in another’s business, but he should know that he is performing a true and due call of God and that his ministry is as efficacious as if it were ratified by the laying on of hands for the office of the ministry in the whole church”⁷; and

WHEREAS, Examples of such emergencies given in the same quote include “when some Christians are in a place where no appointed pastor is to be had ... or when some Christians are among Calvinists, Schwenckfelders, Adiaphorists, or Majorists, whom they must avoid as false teachers”⁸; and

WHEREAS, 1989 Res. 3-05B addressed these types of situations when it made provisions for districts to license laymen to preach and administer the sacraments in congregations where there was no pastor available lest “God’s people be deprived of the opportunity for corporate worship and the celebration of the sacraments”; and

WHEREAS, Licensed lay deacons have been used effectively by many LCMS districts since 1989 to meet such needs, and districts have developed training programs and guidelines for their service which include a formal request from the congregation and commissioning, continuing education, and direct supervision by an ordained pastor; and

WHEREAS, The Res. 4-06A Task Force Report reported 276 licensed lay deacons across the districts of the LCMS being used for preaching and administration of the sacraments under the supervision of pastors; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Res. 4-06A Task Force be thanked for its study of this issue; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention affirm the use of licensed lay deacon ministry as an appropriate expression of this partnership between the priesthood of believers and those ordained to the Office of the Ministry; and be it finally

Resolved, That LCMS districts work together to train men for such ministry and establish similar guidelines for their service.

Board of Directors
Florida-Georgia District

Notes

1. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 334.

2. Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 92.

3. C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, trans. J. T. Mueller, (St. Louis: CPH, 1987), 57.

4. Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” in vol. 36 of *Luther’s Works*, ed. J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, and H. T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 116.

5. Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 47.

6. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 281.

7. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 281.

8. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 281.

13-23

To Affirm and Encourage Ministry of Licensed Lay Deacons

Rationale

- A congregation identifies a ministry need that can best be served by someone trained for Word and Sacrament ministry. One of those options is to use the services of a licensed lay deacon. The function of a licensed lay deacon is to extend the Office of the Ministry under the supervision of an ordained pastor.
- The congregation and the Northwest District Office determine and agree that the ministry need of the congregation could be served by a deacon licensed for Word and Sacrament ministry (normally, a local individual who is already a member of that particular LCMS congregation).
- The candidate is then trained through Mission Training Center (or its partners) with a set of common core areas.
- Upon successful completion of all training and an interview with the office of the district president, if the candidate is determined ready he will be licensed.
- The licensed lay deacon is supervised by a rostered, ordained pastor, which includes but is not limited to the following:
 - Regular monthly agenda-driven meetings
 - Annual review
 - Plan for continuing education
- The re-licensing of the licensed lay deacon is reviewed annually. It is not automatically granted.

(For more details, please see “Guidelines for Licensed Deacon Ministry,” available at www.nowlcms.org/ and <http://nowlcms.org/crossroads/resources#991&2700> for access on the website.)

Proposed Action

WHEREAS, God is multiplying His work among us so we can be Christ’s “witnesses to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:1–8); and

WHEREAS, When the Early Church saw a need in the Church that was not being sufficiently met by the apostles, the apostles responded to that need by appointing seven deacons including Stephen and Philip (Acts 6:1–7); Stephen engaged in the public preaching of the Word (Acts 6:8–7:53), and Philip administered the Sacrament of Holy Baptism (Acts 8:26–40). God used this to expand the ministry of the apostles; and

WHEREAS, The ministry of ecclesiastically supervised licensed lay deacons currently being used in many LCMS districts, including the Northwest District, has assisted greatly in maintaining and expanding Word and Sacrament ministry in many congregations and mission areas, especially for smaller congregations and new outreach areas unable to support the services of a full-time pastor or missionary; and

WHEREAS, The removal of the current licensed lay deacon program would immediately eliminate Word and Sacrament ministry in at least 10 percent of the Northwest District congregations and severely reduce Word and Sacrament ministry in another 10 percent of congregations nationally, affecting thousands of congregational members and their efforts to serve their communities; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Northwest District in convention affirm and encourage district circuits and congregations to continue the use of licensed lay deacons in ministry settings to extend the function of the local pastoral office; and be it further

Resolved, That the selection, training, supervision, and service of the licensed lay deacons within the Northwest District be held to the highest standards of accountability and adherence to the “Guidelines for Licensed Deacon Ministry”; and be it further

Resolved, That the Northwest District in convention respectfully decline attempts to restrict or cancel district-authorized ministries served by licensed lay deacons under the supervision of ordained pastors; and be it further

Resolved, That the Northwest District in convention respectfully decline attempts to require licensed lay deacons to enter the specific ministry pastor (SMP) program when this would restrict, hinder, or stop ongoing Word and Sacrament ministry in our local congregations and mission areas; and be it further

Resolved, That we rejoice together and give thanks to God for equipping His Church both with the Means of Grace and dedicated, called, and trained workers, both lay and ordained, who faithfully and passionately reach people in their communities with the Good News of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That delegates to the 2015 Northwest District convention rise to thank the Lord of the harvest for the many gifts and blessings He has bestowed on our congregations and local ministries through the dedicated and faithful service of supervised licensed lay deacons; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Northwest District convention memorialize this resolution to the 2016 LCMS convention.

Northwest District; Immanuel, Puyallup, WA

13-24

To Encourage and Affirm Ministry of Licensed Lay Deacons

WHEREAS, The need for proclaiming the Gospel in our communities is vital to the salvation of all people and remains the most urgent and necessary ministry of the congregations of the CNH District; and

WHEREAS, God continues to multiply His work to, in, among, and beyond us so we can be Christ’s “witnesses to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:1–8) and serve Him faithfully as the “Lord of the harvest” (Luke 10:1–12); and

WHEREAS, Scriptures teach that there are several and various gifts that the Holy Spirit pours out upon His Church for proclaiming His Word with the intent that all people be authorized to repentance and faith, that all saints are equipped for the work of ministry, and that Christ’s Body be built up in love (Rom. 10 and Eph. 4); and

WHEREAS, The ministry of pastors with vicars, deacons, elders, teachers, deaconesses, and other Spirit-gifted church workers continues to nurture baptized believers and communing members and equip them for evangelical witness and service in the world (1 Cor. 12:14; Eph. 4:1–16; 1 Pet. 4:4–7; 1 Thess. 1:8); and

WHEREAS, The ministry of ecclesiastically supervised licensed deacons currently being used in many LCMS districts, including the CNH, has assisted greatly in maintaining and expanding Word and Sacrament ministry in many congregations and mission arenas, especially for smaller congregations and new outreach areas unable to support the services of a full-time pastor or missionary; and

WHEREAS, The CNH District presently has more than 15 licensed lay deacons who faithfully proclaim the Gospel to people in mission arenas and small congregations otherwise inadequately served; and

WHEREAS, A specific concern underlying the decision to authorize the practice of licensing of lay deacons by the 1989 LCMS convention was “identifying various and perhaps new ways of involving laypeople in specific congregational ministries, and especially in the planting of new missions”; and

WHEREAS, The CNH District has increased significantly its focus on the planting of new missions that will in turn plant new missions; and

WHEREAS, Paul commends the Church, particularly in matters that may cause consternation or uncertainty among its members that “all things should be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40); and

WHEREAS, Ministry in all ages, while done “in order” and according to a common confession, may find its expression in a wide variety of practices; and

WHEREAS, The removal of the current licensed deacon program would immediately eliminate or severely reduce Word and Sacrament ministry in several CNH congregations and their communities, and greatly curtail the planting of new missions; therefore be it

Resolved, That the CNH in convention affirm and encourage district circuits and congregations to continue the use of authorized, trained, and supervised licensed deacons in congregations which otherwise would not be served adequately; and be it further

Resolved, That the CNH in convention affirm and encourage district circuits and congregations to continue the use of authorized, trained, and supervised licensed deacons in the planting of new missions; and be it further

Resolved, That the selection, training, supervision, and service of our licensed lay deacons in the CNH District be held to the highest standards of accountability and adherence to the standards of practice established by our Synod, which is also the earnest desire of all licensed deacons and their supervising pastors in our district; and be it further

Resolved, That specific emphasis be placed upon missionary outreach and the planting of new missions in the programs and curricula utilized by the CNH District in the preparation and licensing of lay deacons; and be it further

Resolved, That the CNH District encourage the district president to support the ongoing training of licensed lay deacons through making available needed courses and providing financial assistance where appropriate; and be it further

Resolved, That the CNH District continue to maintain the standard practices established by our Synod for those congregations and mission plants that utilize licensed deacons in order that they remain faithful to our doctrine and mission intent; and be it further

Resolved, That the CNH District in convention respectfully decline attempts to restrict or cancel district-authorized ministries served by licensed deacons under the supervision of ordained pastors; and be it further

Resolved, That the CNH District in convention respectfully decline attempts to require licensed deacons to enter the specific ministry pastor (SMP) program when this would restrict, hinder, or stop ongoing Word and Sacrament ministry in our local congregations and mission arenas; and be it further

Resolved, That we rejoice together and give thanks to God for equipping His Church with His Means of Grace and well as dedicated, authorized, and trained workers, both lay and ordained, who faithfully and passionately reach people in their communities with the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That delegates to the 2015 CNH District convention thank the Lord of the harvest for the many gifts and blessings He has bestowed on our congregations and local ministries through the dedicated and faithful service of our ordained pastors, commissioned ministers, and supervised licensed deacons; and be it finally

Resolved, That the CNH District forward this resolution to the 2016 LCMS convention.

California-Nevada-Hawaii District

13-25

To Call and Ordain Certified Male Deacons to Preaching Office

WHEREAS, The Res. 4-06A Task Force has completed its study and reported the same to the Synod in July 2015 as directed; and

WHEREAS, The preaching office is the one and only office instituted and required by God in the church (2 Tim. 2:1–2; Titus 1:5); and

WHEREAS, The task force pointed out that, according to Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession, “Concerning church government it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call”; and

WHEREAS, The task force’s report acknowledges that “the majority of the deacons serve in settings where there are significant if not extreme financial, geographic, or demographic challenges”; and

WHEREAS, The task force reports that many licensed lay deacons are serving in Word and Sacrament ministry”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank the Res. 4-06A Task Force for its report; and be it further

Resolved, That those districts of the Synod who are currently using licensed lay deacons in Word and Sacrament ministry establish common training requirements, in consultation with representatives from each of the seminaries; and be it further

Resolved, That agreement regarding the requirements for licensed lay deacons be reached and published in the appropriate publications of the Synod no later than September of 2017; and be it further

Resolved, That the office of minister of religion—ordained deacon be added to the roster of Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That upon certification by a district president that a man has completed the training requirements, he shall be eligible to receive a call as a minister of religion—ordained deacon; and be it further

Resolved, That upon receiving and accepting a call from a congregation, the minister of religion—ordained deacon shall be ordained and authorized to serve in Word and Sacrament ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That those licensed lay deacons who are currently serving in Word and Sacrament ministry be directed by their district president to seek ordination through colloquy as a minister of religion—ordained deacon; and be it further

Resolved, That such colloquy interviews will be conducted by the regional vice-president of the Synod and the district president where the licensed lay deacon is serving; and be it finally

Resolved, That where there is financial hardship that would hinder the licensed lay deacon from accomplishing any additional education required by the proposed colloquy, assistance will be provided through the district as it partners with the deacon’s congregation.

Board of Directors, Michigan District; Cedar Crest, White Lake MI; St. Matthew, Walled Lake, MI; St. Luke, Haslett,

MI

13-26

To Celebrate and Encourage Use of Licensed Lay Deacons in Word and Sacrament Ministry

WHEREAS, Jesus' words still ring true that there remains an urgent need for sending workers into the harvest fields where "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Luke 10:2; Matt. 9:37); and

WHEREAS, When the risen Jesus commissioned His followers in Luke 24:47–48 saying, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things," there were more than just the eleven apostles present—all gathered with them received this mission; and

WHEREAS, Christ calls some to the office of the ministry as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers, as it says in Ephesians 4:11, and their role is to "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12); and

WHEREAS, In the Scriptures those called to the office of the ministry are also called bishops or overseers, presbyters or elders, and pastors or shepherds; and

WHEREAS, Deacons in the Scriptures also participated in this work of ministry not merely serving tables (as in Acts 6) but in preaching and Baptism as well (as in Acts 7–8); and

WHEREAS, In the Scriptures, deacons are distinguished from bishops or overseers, elders or presbyters, and pastors or shepherds in both Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:1–13; and

WHEREAS, The Res. 4-06A Task Force Report listed that there were, as of summer 2014, 525 licensed lay deacons serving in LCMS congregations; that 212 of those were serving in the ministry of both Word and Sacrament in a supervised capacity under an ordained pastor; and that 115 of these congregations served by licensed lay deacons would not survive without licensed lay deacon ministry; and

WHEREAS, The disciples in Acts 1:15–26 together chose an apostle to take Judas's place among the Twelve; the Church at Antioch chose together to send Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:1–3; and Paul left Titus to appoint elders in every town in Crete in Titus 1:5, showing that the call to serve in Word and Sacrament ministry happens by God through His Church; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions echo this when they say in Augsburg Confession XIV, "It is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper public call"; and

WHEREAS, Neither the Holy Scriptures nor the Lutheran Confessions contain the specific directive that only ordained pastors may participate in public preaching or administration of the sacraments; and

WHEREAS, The Early Church Father Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* quotes the Bishop of Jerusalem and the Bishop of Caesarea at the start of the third century concerning the topic of laymen preaching at the request of bishops saying, "Whenever persons able to instruct the brethren are found they are exhorted by the bishops to preach to the people" (*Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine* in series 2, vol. 1 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, pp. 667–68); and

WHEREAS, LCMS father C. F. W. Walther cites this very situation mentioned above in his work *Church and Ministry* in order to make the point that ordination is not necessary so long as one is called (*Church and Ministry*, trans. J. T. Mueller, p. 267); and

WHEREAS, Licensed lay deacons are equipped for ministry by those serving in the office of the ministry through training programs established by the districts, are overseen in ministry by called and

ordained pastors, and are called by the congregations they serve to participate in this ministry of Word and Sacraments; and

WHEREAS, the 4-06A Task Force Report is recommending that licensed lay deacon ministry come to an end and recommending that only ordained pastors participate in preaching and sacramental ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention affirm that the use of licensed lay deacons for Word and Sacrament ministry is in accord with both the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention celebrate the use of licensed lay deacons as a vital component of the ministry of the Gospel and thank all of our licensed lay deacons for their often-volunteer service on behalf of Christ.

Holy Cross
Spokane, WA

13-27

To Study Res. 4-06A Task Force Report

WHEREAS, "It is most important that there be a theological consensus on this matter within our Synod that is Scriptural and confessional" (Res. 4-06A Task Force Report, p. 20); and

WHEREAS, "No synodical plan, proposal, or resolution can take the place of joint study of God's Word and our confessions, with respectful and prayerful discussions that enable us to achieve genuine agreement and appropriate practices" (Report, p. 20); therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention receive this report with thanks to the task force for its thorough work in producing this report; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention urge the districts of the Synod to arrange for and promote opportunities for study of God's Word and our confessions, that theological consensus concerning this matter might be achieved; and be it finally

Resolved, That the recommendations of this report be brought to the next convention of the Synod for consideration and action.

Circuit 16, Southeastern District; Circuit 17, Southeastern District

13-28

To Continue to Support Certified Lay Ministers

WHEREAS, God has blessed the Church with a talented laity, whom He has blessed with spiritual gifts; and

WHEREAS, The Church has benefited by the use of laity as certified lay ministers; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2015 Pacific Southwest District Convention commend the work of the licensed lay deacons and parish ministry assistants of the Pacific Southwest District; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2015 Pacific Southwest District Convention memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to continue to support certified lay ministers in their respective districts in accordance with and with respect to the Augsburg Confession, Art. XIV, and the Synod at large.

Pacific Southwest District

13-29

To Affirm Use of Licensed Lay Deacons to Deliver Word and Sacrament Ministry

WHEREAS, The population density of some districts makes it nearly impossible for remote congregations to call and support an ordained pastor; and

WHEREAS, The geographical realities of remote congregations make it impractical for an ordained pastor to serve the needs of remote congregations; and

WHEREAS, Congregations have been formed through the supervised work of licensed lay deacon congregations, which by the grace of God have grown and are now being served by ordained pastors; and

WHEREAS, The Res. 4-06A Task Force Report estimates that approximately 115 congregations would need to close if the ministry of licensed lay deacons was discontinued; and

WHEREAS, Many who did not know or believe in Jesus have by God's grace come to repentance and saving faith in Jesus at least in part through the supervised work of licensed lay deacons; and

WHEREAS, Districts have developed training programs and guidelines for licensed lay deacons that include a formal request from the congregation and commissioning, continued education, and direct supervision by an ordained pastor; and

WHEREAS, Districts, including the Northwest District, have established an effective supervisory network that has been successful for a significant number of years; and

WHEREAS, No congregation being served by a licensed lay deacon with Word and Sacrament ministry has filed a formal complaint regarding the work being done by licensed lay deacons, and, in fact, congregations in need are earnestly seeking and exceedingly grateful for the work being done in their midst by licensed lay deacons; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention continue to affirm the ministry of licensed lay deacons as an auxiliary office to serve the priesthood of believers and help share the saving grace of Jesus; and be it further

Resolved, That local districts continue their efforts to standardize the identification, training, placement, and supervision of licensed lay deacons.

Prince of Peace
Portland, OR

13-30

To Modify and Fund Recommendations of Res. 4-06A Task Force Report

WHEREAS, The 2013 Synod convention approved the appointment of a task force to study and report on the current practice of licensed lay deacons/ministers, and the task force has completed its study and made its report; and

WHEREAS, The task force is to be commended for the voluminous effort to prepare their report in a fair and balanced manner; and

WHEREAS, The report specifically recommends "that those licensed lay deacons who are regularly preaching and administering the sacraments be required to apply for a colloquy to examine their ability to teach and overall fitness for ministry. Upon certification by the colloquy committee, they will be called by the congregations where they have been serving, ordained into the Office of the Public Ministry, and placed on the roster of specific ministry pastors"; and

WHEREAS, This particular recommendation further proposes an application process that far exceeds the current "Specific Ministry Pastor Admission Sequence" that is posted on the Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) website; and

WHEREAS, This particular recommendation also proposes an exhaustive revision of the current colloquy committee; and

WHEREAS, This same recommendation further proposes limitations on "Colloquized SMP Clergy" that are not currently required by the 2013 *Handbook* (e.g., "Only those male deacons who are *age 55 or older* will ordinarily be admitted to the SMP Colloquy program"); and

WHEREAS, This recommendation proposes a transition period of only two years for the entire process to be carried out; and

WHEREAS, Recommendations are also proposed regarding the "Further Utilization of SMP Program with Financial Support," and "Further Utilization of Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology [EIIT], Center for Hispanic Studies [CHS], and Cross-Cultural Institute," which specifically address the need for financial resources to reduce the burden for SMP program costs for those participating in the process; and

WHEREAS, in the Appendix B section, the task force summarily proposes that

"1. LLD candidates for SMP colloquy shall meet two initial criteria:

- (1) having served in preaching or preaching and sacramental administration for two or more Sundays each month over the past two years or more and
- (2) being 55 years of age or older."

therefore be it

Resolved, That the task force be acknowledged and thanked by the Synod in convention for their arduous efforts and thorough report; and be it further

Resolved, That Recommendation 1 regarding "Colloquy for Licensed Lay Deacons" be modified to reflect the current *Handbook* and *SMP Admission Sequence* requirements (e.g., no age limitation and the current admission sequence); and be it further

Resolved, That the current colloquy committee not be expanded as recommended; and be it further

Resolved, That the recommendation's proposal for financial support be of first importance for the sake of those who desire and sense their inner calling to continue their lay ministry, but who are also willing to seek colloquy and admission into the specific ministry pastor program; and be it further

Resolved, That the transition period suggested not be enacted until such time as the financial support is established and available for those licensed lay ministers to enter the colloquy SMP process; and be it further

Resolved, That only when the financial support for the recommended changes has been put into place that no new deacons be licensed by district presidents for Word and Sacrament ministry; and be it finally

Resolved, That the rest of the task force's "Report to the Synod" be commended to the Synod in convention for conversation and consideration.

Circuit 17, Southeastern District; Circuit 16, Southeastern District

13-31

To Encourage and Continue Ministry of Licensed Lay Deacons

WHEREAS, The 1989 Res. 3-05B framed the licensing of district-trained (locally trained) lay deacons for Word and Sacrament ministry in the context of Augsburg Confession Art. V and XIV; and

WHEREAS, Licensed lay deacons support the ministry of the congregation and are essential to others as they serve congregational members; and

WHEREAS, Licensed lay deacons have served faithfully, effectively, and economically in a variety of ministries including small, remote, and economically strained congregations, vacant parishes, and cross-cultural settings; and

WHEREAS, Licensed lay deacons serving under supervising pastors are doing so under the direction and blessing of the local, self-governing, and self-supporting congregations; and

WHEREAS, Some congregations would need to close if the ministry of licensed lay deacons were discontinued; and

WHEREAS, The training of licensed lay deacons facilitates a collaborative approach to building lay involvement by encouraging lay members to grow their faith through the study of the Word, which positively impacts the faith of other members; and

WHEREAS, This succeeds in promoting a balanced leadership model to support more powerfully the ministry of the congregation; and

WHEREAS, Those who did not know or believe in Jesus have, by God's grace, at least in part through the supervised work of licensed lay deacons, come to repentance and saving faith in Jesus; therefore be it

Resolved, That the districts' lay deacon training programs be encouraged to continue and expand as the Lord of the Church leads and empowers; and be it further

Resolved, That licensed lay deacons be encouraged to serve diligently and humbly under the direction and authority of each district president/supervising pastor whether in immediate or remote settings of shared ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention recognize that deacon training, licensing, and consecration is not in contradiction to Augsburg XIV; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention continue to recognize the service to the congregations of deacons rightly consecrated and called to their respective congregations; and be it finally

Resolved, That the convention encourage the continuance and expansion of deacon training and use, and thank the deacons for their years and time of service.

Immanuel
Tonasket, WA

13-32

To Direct Licensed Lay Deacons Serving in Extenuating Circumstances as "Sole Pastor" to Seek Ordination

WHEREAS, The Res. 4-06A Task Force has completed its study and reported the same to the Synod in July 2015 as directed; and

WHEREAS, The task force reports that indeed some licensed lay deacons are serving in Word and Sacrament ministry in a manner

consistent with the role of an ordained pastor, although still under some supervision; and

WHEREAS, The task force report acknowledges that "the majority of deacons serve in settings where there are significant if not extreme financial, geographic, or demographic challenges"; and

WHEREAS, The task force states that "central to the theological debate regarding LLD [licensed lay deacon] practices is the understanding of AC XIV" and the "*rite vocatus*" of those serving in Word and Sacrament ministry in the church; and

WHEREAS, Most licensed lay deacons serve in the same congregation as their supervising pastor and are serving in a clearly defined supportive role to the pastoral office, are under his authority, and carry out ministries at his discretion and direction and are therefore not serving in a manner that is in conflict with our confession (AC XIV); and

WHEREAS, The effective service of licensed lay deacons extends the supervising pastors' reach to and by the congregation to which the pastor has been called for Word and Sacrament ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That district lay deacon training programs be encouraged to continue and expand as the Lord of the Church leads and empowers; and be it further

Resolved, That licensed lay deacons be encouraged to serve diligently and humbly under the direction and authority of their supervising pastors whether in immediate or remote settings of shared ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That in those extreme situations where a licensed lay deacon is serving in the role of "sole pastor" because of financial, geographical, or demographic challenges, and God's people would otherwise not receive the faithful nourishment of God's Word and Sacrament, the licensed lay deacon will be directed by his district president to seek ordination through colloquy into the specific ministry pastor (SMP) program of the Synod or other appropriate route to ordination (e.g., EIT, CHS); and be it further

Resolved, That such colloquy interviews will be accomplished through the regional vice-presidents of the Synod in coordination and cooperation with the First Vice-President of the Synod, seminary faculties, and the district president where the licensed lay deacon is serving; and be it finally

Resolved, That where there is financial hardship that would hinder the licensed lay deacon to accomplish any additional education required by the proposed colloquy, assistance will be provided through the district, Synod, and seminaries as they partner with the congregation.

Grace, Monroe, MI; First, Charlotte, MI

13-33

To Encourage Multi-Point Parishes

WHEREAS, God's Word calls us to "keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3); and

WHEREAS, Sister congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod confess and live out a shared commitment to the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions as a correct exposition of that Word; and

WHEREAS, Congregations have experienced or are experiencing decline in membership and vitality because of changing demographics in their membership and communities (rural and urban); and

WHEREAS, These same congregations may be facing extreme financial stress and therefore not be able to provide for the leadership of a full-time pastor on their own; and

WHEREAS, The availability of semi-retired or bi-vocational pastors significantly trails the need, or they are not geographically flexible to meet the needs of these struggling congregations; and

WHEREAS, Many of these congregations are in remote settings that do not allow for a multi-congregation parish to be served weekly by a called ordained pastor; and

WHEREAS, The training and licensing of lay deacons has addressed the needs of some of these congregations, with the attending supervising pastors, circuit visitors, and district presidents, respectively; and

WHEREAS, Such arrangements for Word and Sacrament ministry have caused concern among our fellowship in regard to the “rite vocatus” of AC XIV; and

WHEREAS, It is essential that we provide the very best in Word and Sacrament ministry possible for God’s people by upholding AC XIV; and

WHEREAS, It is also God’s call upon His Church to diligently seek to “make disciples as we go [and wherever we go], by teaching and baptizing” (Matt. 28:19); therefore be it

Resolved, That congregations that are unable to financially support a full-time pastor to provide Word and Sacrament ministry intentionally seek to enter into a multi-parish relationship with another geographically close congregation of the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That vibrant and healthy congregations of the LCMS intentionally seek to encourage and assist struggling sister congregations in their geographic vicinity through shared programs, services, and pastoral leadership, leading to a stronger mission together; and be it further

Resolved, To recognize and affirm the intention of 1989 Res. 3-05B regarding the licensing of district-trained lay deacons was and is intended to meet this very need to some degree; and be it further

Resolved, That in the rare occurrence that a licensed lay deacon is asked to provide Word and Sacrament ministry in these extreme cases, that the congregation served by the licensed lay deacon be directed to formally enter into covenant with the licensed lay deacon’s supervising pastor’s congregation and thereby recognize and accept the supervising pastor also as their pastor; and be it further

Resolved, That all supervising pastors of licensed lay deacons be encouraged to be diligent in their supervision for the sake of God’s people being served by him through the licensed lay deacon; and be it further

Resolved, That the supervising pastor frequently visit the supported congregation to provide direct pastoral care and leadership, along with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper (circuit rider); and be it finally

Resolved, That the resident district president identify and intentionally initiate collegial conversations throughout his district, and coordinate such efforts through the circuit visitors.

Grace, Monroe, MI; First, Charlotte, MI; Outer Drive Faith, Detroit, MI

13-34

To Affirm Deacon as Auxiliary Office

WHEREAS, The pastoral ministry [*Predigtamt*] is the highest office in the church and from it stems all other offices in the church, and in Scripture the incumbents of the ministerial office are called elders, bishops, rulers [*Vorsteher*], stewards, and the like; and

WHEREAS, There are many auxiliary offices within the church (e.g., director of Christian education, director of family life ministry, deaconess, Lutheran teachers, director of parish music), all of which are supervised by the holder of the Office of Public Ministry; and

WHEREAS, In Scripture, incumbents of subordinate offices are called deacons. The deacon is a servant, not only of God but also of the congregation and of the bishop. The Scriptural foundation for deacons is found in Holy Scripture where deacons and bishops are noted side by side in 1 Timothy 3:1–13 and Philippians 1:1. In our church polity, distinct levels of ordination already exist: specific ministry pastors (SMP) are subordinate to the general ministry pastorate; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther considered those listed in Acts 6:1–6 as deacons (Luther’s Works, vol. 28, Lectures on 1 Timothy), and C. F. W. Walther’s *Church and Ministry* confirms the deacon’s ministry within the congregation (p. 65); and

WHEREAS, Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus were chosen to assist the apostles (Acts 6:1–6); Stephen was martyred for preaching and teaching. God used Philip, one chosen as a deacon in Acts 6, to evangelize in Samaria (Acts 8:4–8), baptize the Ethiopian convert along the Gaza Road, and teach in Azotus and Caesarea (Acts 8:26–40); and

WHEREAS, Men ordained into the public ministry (general pastor) have historically supervised subordinate offices and commissioned ministers of religion in a conscientious manner, being faithful to their responsibility; and

WHEREAS, Men ordained into the public ministry (general pastors) supervise vicars, faculty, staff, volunteers, deacons, and specific ministry pastors, who all serve the people of God as extensions of the Office of the Holy Ministry. Supervising pastors who guide this work are within their scope of *episkopos*. Deacons serving autonomous congregations are serving under the blessing and request of that congregation and under the guidance of a general ministry pastor who is responsible for the parish in which the deacon is serving; and

WHEREAS, The “proper call” of Article XIV is upheld by the way in which the deacon candidate is examined, called by a congregation, and commissioned (ordained) by a representative of the Synod. The call is conferred by God through the congregation. Commissioning (ordination) is a solemn public confirmation of the call. Careful oversight by the district president, faithfully enforcing the policies and guidelines for the diaconate as stated in the Council of Presidents manual regarding the duties of supervising pastors, should satisfy any concerns regarding AC XIV; and

WHEREAS, The education and training for men as outlined in 1989 Res. 3-05B is the standard for the educational preparation required by deacons, as noted in the Michigan District and Pacific Southwest District educational programs (as well as others in the Synod); and

WHEREAS, There are many parishes that are unable to support a full-time general ministry pastor and only have a part-time general ministry pastor or a “circuit rider” who visits the parish every four to six weeks or are in a geographical location that prevents timely travel; and

WHEREAS, God’s children have been faithfully served by deacons in many different locations, ranging from small preaching stations and parishes as the primary minister to working alongside the pastor in large parishes. Deacons always serve with the guidance and supervision of a general ministry pastor. Removal of deacons from service to God’s people would cause great hardship and disorder within those parishes that are served by a deacon; and

WHEREAS, The number throughout the Synod of deacons (licensed) is second only to that of directors of Christian education (a nonbiblical office). They are widely accepted throughout the Synod with 77 percent of the districts using preaching deacons; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention give thanks to God for the Office of the Public Ministry and all those pastors who conscientiously perform their duty in supervising the auxiliary offices and subordinate offices provided for those whom God has placed under their care; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention give thanks to God for the men and women in the auxiliary and subordinate offices who faithfully serve His people with an exceptional level of care and competence; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention acknowledge the sincere intent of the Synod task force report regarding the diaconate, declining, however, to affirm the findings as published; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention reaffirm the 1989 Res. 3-05B; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention affirm that the office of deacon is a biblical office and that deacons have a legitimate role in teaching God's Word in partnership with pastors and other subordinate and auxiliary offices, and that deacons have a genuine calling from God to the office of deacon; and be it further

Resolved, That in order to prevent confusion, the office of deacon is a subordinate office to that of the public ministry and as such must always be under the ecclesiastic supervision of a general ministry pastor. It is the general ministry pastor who retains episcopal responsibility for the parish. A man serving as a deacon shall be referred to as deacon in both verbal and written reference; and be it further

Resolved, That the divine call of a man into the office of deacon be confirmed by ordination as in Thesis VI of Walther's *Church and Ministry* as a solemn public confirmation of the call; and be it further

Resolved, That it is deplorable and distressing for God's children to be without the Means of Grace, the pronouncement of the forgiveness of sin, and instruction in the chief articles of Christian doctrine for long periods of time; and be it further

Resolved, That the deacon, at the request and consent of the congregation and with the guidance of the general ministry pastor providing ecclesiastical supervision, may rightly be a witness for the church for new member welcomes, weddings, and adoptions; doing Baptisms in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and granting forgiveness of sin (absolution) to the repentant. The deacon shall promise never to divulge the confessed sins of the repentant sinner. The deacon may consecrate the elements for the Lord's Table; and be it finally

Resolved, That the diaconate is one of God's blessings for the church, a tool to use in the service of God's people, in partnership with the general ministry pastor, other members of subordinate and auxiliary offices, and all of God's children.

River of Life, Dayton, NV; St. Luke, Portola CA

13-35

To Establish Office of Licensed Deacon and Ordain Licensed Deacons as Deacons

WHEREAS, The purpose of the church is to proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world and make disciples of all nations; and

WHEREAS, The harvest is ready but the workers are few; and

WHEREAS, When a need arose in the Early Church, the apostles in Christian freedom did not hesitate to create the auxiliary office of deacon to help with the ministry of the church (Acts 6); and

WHEREAS, These deacons were involved in the public proclamation of the Word and Baptism (Acts 7–8); and

WHEREAS, The ministry of deacons, contrasted to the ministry of bishops and overseers, is noted in Holy Scripture in such passages as Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:1–15; and

WHEREAS, In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul instructs Pastor Timothy, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others"; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS, in Christian freedom, has authorized licensed deacons to work under the supervision of ordained pastors to extend the work of the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, These licensed deacons are fully supervised, carefully educated, and called to serve in a particular ministry; and

WHEREAS, Ordination is an ancient tradition that the church uses publicly to recognize and confirm the call of the Holy Spirit; and

WHEREAS, The ancient church ordained people into many auxiliary offices, including deacons, for service in the church; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS, in Christian freedom, established the office of licensed deacon as a regular office under the Office of the Holy Ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That licensed deacons be ordained publicly to the office of deacon; and be it further

Resolved, That districts of the Synod recruit, train, and utilize licensed deacons to proclaim boldly the Good News of Jesus Christ throughout our nation and our world.

Mt. Drum

Copper Center, AK

13-36

To Affirm Use of Licensed Lay Deacons for Word and Sacrament Ministry in Cases of Necessity

WHEREAS, Rigorous training in Scripture and doctrine is required before being licensed to serve as a licensed lay deacon; and

WHEREAS, Continuing education is required in order to renew the license of a licensed lay deacon; and

WHEREAS, An ordained pastor must supervise and mentor the licensed lay deacons; and

WHEREAS, Licensed lay deacons serve the mission of the Church, following the examples of Stephen and Philip in Acts, carrying out the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19); and

WHEREAS, The licensed lay deacon does not seek to supplant or replace the role of the pastor, but rather to represent the pastor and serve as his agent, announcing forgiveness of sins, preaching the Gospel, and administering the Sacraments in a place where limitations of time and distance or language prohibit the nearest pastor from adequately serving a congregation that would otherwise be without preaching, the Sacraments, or pastoral care; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention affirm and encourage the use of licensed lay deacons for preaching and administering the Sacraments where limitations of time and distance or language prohibit the nearest pastor from adequately serving a congregation that would otherwise be without preaching, Sacraments, or pastoral care; and be it further

Resolved, That the districts of the Synod work together to train men to serve in cooperation with, and under the supervision of,

ordained pastors in cases of necessity as determined by the local pastor and the president of the district.

Hope
Woodburn, OR

13-37

To Retain District Lay Deacon Programs

WHEREAS, Grace Lutheran Church of Canastota, New York, is a small congregation in the Eastern District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

WHEREAS, The congregation of Grace Lutheran Church does not and will not likely have the financial resources in the future to support a full-time pastor, and supporting a part-time pastor would tax the resources of the church greatly; and

WHEREAS, The congregation of Grace Lutheran Church, from past experience, needs a form of pastoral care to remain a viable congregation; and

WHEREAS, Many other small congregations, both in the Eastern District and the United States, are in similar circumstances as the congregation of Grace Lutheran Church; and

WHEREAS, The congregation of Grace Lutheran Church is currently served by a licensed lay deacon of the Eastern District of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The congregation of Grace Lutheran Church has found that this licensed lay deacon is trained and fully competent in the Scriptures and in the teachings of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The congregation of Grace Lutheran Church believes that a well-trained licensed lay deacon can provide proper pastoral care in congregations with small numbers of individuals facing challenging circumstances, such as geographical isolation, limited financial resources, or when a mission or congregation consists of individuals from an ethnic or linguistic minority; and

WHEREAS, The congregation of Grace Lutheran Church believes that the licensed lay deacon program is the affordable option it has to receive pastoral care; and

WHEREAS, The congregation of Grace Lutheran Church believes that elimination of the licensed lay deacon program is contrary to the goals set forth in “*Ablaze!*—Sharing the Good News of Christ Jesus with 100 Million People by 2017”; therefore be it

Resolved, That licensed lay deacon programs be retained by the LCMS.

Grace Lutheran Church
Canastota, NY

13-38

To Make Provision for Continued Existence of Licensed Lay Deacon Status

WHEREAS, The future of the licensed lay deacon is in question at the 2016 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

WHEREAS, Our congregation, Royal Redeemer Lutheran Church, in North Royalton, Ohio, has had the services of five licensed lay deacons who have served well, and two of them so well they were given ordained status after ten years of effective ministry; and

WHEREAS, Many LCMS congregations in our part of the Ohio District are withering away and can no longer afford a full-time pastor, but they can be served ably by a knowledgeable layman under supervision of an ordained pastor; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention make provision for the continued existence of the licensed lay deacon status; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod make provision for facilitating the training and supervision of licensed lay deacons at the district level.

Royal Redeemer
North Royalton, OH

13-39

To Keep Deacon Ministry

WHEREAS, The deacon ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod provides a valuable resource to congregations and their members; and

WHEREAS, There would be churches in our Synod who would not be able to have Word and Sacrament ministry if it were not for the deacon ministry and the help they provide; and

WHEREAS, The fact is that some churches cannot afford to pay a pastor to be full-time or part-time in ministry; and

WHEREAS, There are some deacons who would not be able to go into the seminary by the traditional route or the Specific Ministry Pastor program due to health reasons, financial concerns, etc.; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS make every effort to keep the deacon ministry going by any means possible; and be it further

Resolved, The LCMS redouble its efforts to identify men eligible for the pastoral ministry; and be it finally

Resolved, To train more men to be deacons and work under the supervision of their pastor, to help with Word and Sacrament ministry, to continue to make use of the trained licensed deacon in their midst.

First
Little Rock, AR

13-40

To Affirm Ministry of Licensed Lay Deacons

WHEREAS, Deacons were appointed in Acts 6, and the Holy Spirit led Philip and Stephen to proclaim the Good News and to baptize and teach (Acts 6–8); and

WHEREAS, Dr. C. F. W. Walther recognized “auxiliary/helping” offices to assist ordained pastors and to further the ministry of the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, “Some are called to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ...” (Eph. 4:11–12); and

WHEREAS, Immanuel Lutheran Church is financially unable to support a full-time pastor; and

WHEREAS, Our congregation’s vacancy has been faithfully filled by a licensed deacon for more than two and a half years, providing for the spiritual needs of this congregation; visiting the sick, dying, and homebound; officiating at funerals; and baptizing the unbaptized; and

WHEREAS, The licensed deacon serving our congregation is serving under the direct supervision and direction of an ordained pastor; and

WHEREAS, The licensed deacon serving our congregation serves under the careful oversight of our district president, who faithfully enforces the policies and guidelines for the use of licensed lay deacons; and

WHEREAS, That licensed deacon serving our congregation is required by the district president to complete annual continuing education requirements; and

WHEREAS, There are no ordained pastors, either active or retired, who are willing or able to serve as our pastor; therefore be it

Resolved, That we the members of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Albany, Oregon, strongly encourage the Synod in convention to support, continue, and expand the licensed deacon program throughout the Synod so that small congregations are able to continue worshiping and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Immanuel
Albany, OR

13-41

To Affirm Ministry of Licensed Lay Deacons

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus Christ has established His church to “be My witnesses ... to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8); and

WHEREAS, It is God’s desire that all people might be saved (1 Tim. 2:4); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord through the apostle St. Paul declared: “It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph. 4:11–12); and

WHEREAS, Throughout history God’s people have prayed for pastors to preach, teach, administer the Holy Sacraments, and equip God’s people for the work of ministry. However, in times of need and appropriate opportunity, others have been engaged for preaching and sacramental administration; and

WHEREAS, Deacons were appointed in Acts 6 to wait on tables and care for widows, but the Holy Spirit led Philip and Stephen to proclaim the Good News and to baptize and teach (Acts 6–8); and

WHEREAS, Dr. C. F. W. Walther recognized “auxiliary/helping” offices to assist ordained pastors and to further the ministry of the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, Supervising pastors who guide the work of licensed lay deacons are serving within their scope as “episkopos” or “presbuteros” when deacons serve as extensions of the one Office of the Holy Ministry; and

WHEREAS, Licensed lay deacons serving under supervising pastors are doing so under the direction and blessing of the autonomous congregation which has properly made decisions about such ministry in their midst; and

WHEREAS, Licensed lay deacons have served faithfully, effectively, and economically in a variety of ministries including small, remote, and economically strained congregations, vacant parishes, and in cross-cultural settings; and

WHEREAS, Careful oversight by district presidents, faithfully enforcing the policies and guidelines for the use of licensed lay deacons as provided in the COP manual regarding the tasks of supervising pastors, meets the concerns concerning AC XIV; and

WHEREAS, Licensed lay deacons have simply been a lifeline of the Gospel for many congregations, communities, and people who otherwise would be denied access to preaching and sacramental worship; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm and encourage the supervised ministry of licensed lay deacons in the LCMS and support those districts that desire to provide such training and oversight; and be it further

Resolved, That district presidents encourage ordained pastors who supervise licensed lay deacons to be diligent and faithful in their supervision; and be it further

Resolved, That as part of their supervision of licensed lay deacons, district presidents inform their licensed lay deacons of continuing education opportunities and encourage attendance in at least one continuing education event a year to help in their service of Word and Sacrament ministry; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS develop a plan to make ordination more accessible to licensed lay deacons who would like to seek ordination through colloquy, SMP, EIIT, CHS, or other appropriate routes provided by the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank the Res. 4-06A Task Force for its report and utilize aspects and insights from the report to strengthen licensed lay deacon ministry.

Christ
Marshall, MI

13-42

To Endorse Concordia College—New York’s Collaborative Lay Deacon Program

WHEREAS, Theologically educated laity are a gift to the church and can contribute to our Synod and to our congregations in manifold ways; and

WHEREAS, Individual districts have over the years established their own lay leadership (deacon) training programs with differing expectations and requirements; and

WHEREAS, Trained lay leadership (deacons) are currently serving in a variety of ministries within our districts; and

WHEREAS, Mobility of the general populace has increased the movement of lay deacons into other districts that may not recognize the training and status in their originating district; and

WHEREAS, It would prove beneficial and desirable to maintain a roster of trained lay deacons; and

WHEREAS, Concordia College—New York desires to assist districts and congregations of the LCMS by training lay leaders and facilitating collaborative regional partnerships between districts in lay leadership (deacon) programs; and

WHEREAS, A collaborative lay leadership (deacon) training program provides a standardized lay leadership curriculum and greater resources to facilitate the educational program; and

WHEREAS, The Res. 4-06A Task Force has recommended that a “major emphasis in lay training programs be placed on the role of evangelist and the task of outreach,” which Concordia College provides through its lay deacon program; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention affirm its support for lay leadership (deacon) programs as a gift to the church; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention endorse Concordia College’s new lay leadership (deacon) program as a collaborative means of raising up new lay leaders (deacons) for service in the church; and be it finally

Resolved, That in keeping with the Res. 4-06A Task Force recommendation, the 2016 LCMS convention encourage its member congregations to participate in Concordia College—New York’s lay leadership (deacon) program.

Board of Directors
New Jersey District

13-43

To Provide Financial Assistance for Lay Deacons to Complete SMP Program

WHEREAS, Many districts continue to use licensed lay deacons in a variety of ways; and

WHEREAS, The Specific Ministry Pastor program was initiated at the 2007 convention to bring all routes to ordination under the supervision of the Synod's seminaries; and

WHEREAS, The Res. 4-06A Task Force has recommended (Recommendation 1) a process for existing licensed lay deacons to be colloquized as specific ministry pastors; and

WHEREAS, The task force has also urged the Synod (Recommendation 2) to provide financial assistance for students in the SMP program so that their proper theological education may not be impeded for fiscal reasons; and

WHEREAS, The SMP program should be the preferable option for training of candidates for Word and Sacrament ministry who seek to serve congregations fiscally unable to afford full-time Word and Sacrament ministry or to call either a candidate from one of the residential pastoral formation programs or other ordained minister; and

WHEREAS, The SMP program should likewise be the preferable option for congregations obtaining permanent pastoral care through a minister of Word and Sacrament at congregations fiscally unable to afford full-time Word and Sacrament ministry or to call either a candidate from one of the residential pastoral formation programs or other ordained minister; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod pledge and reserve specific monies to subsidize the candidates with financial need in the SMP program; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod pledge financial support to all licensed lay deacons who seek ordination through the SMP program; and be it finally

Resolved, That the congregations of the Synod urge lay deacons to pursue ordination through the SMP program.

Board of Directors
New Jersey District

13-44

To Include Office of Deacon in List of LCMS Commissioned Ministers

WHEREAS, The office of deacon is one of the theological offices of the Church mentioned in the New Testament (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3); and

WHEREAS, Deacons have fulfilled a necessary and useful function in the ministry of the Church since the time of the apostles when Stephen and six others were appointed to the office of deacon by the church in Jerusalem (Acts 6); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod approved the office of deacon at the 1989 LCMS convention; and

WHEREAS, The theological training received by deacons is of a standard commensurate with other commissioned ministers in the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, Deacons serve under the supervision and direction of an ordained pastor, as do other commissioned ministers; and

WHEREAS, Deacons have provided valuable service to the church at large and to many congregations throughout the LCMS since 1989 in the performance of the public ministry of the Church and of their individual congregations; and

WHEREAS, Deacons are currently not included in the roster of commissioned ministers of the LCMS; and

WHEREAS, The office of deacon is licensed with each individual district of the LCMS rather than under the auspices of the seminaries and universities of the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS Synod commend the men who are currently serving as deacons throughout the LCMS and encourage them to continue to perform this necessary function of the public ministry of the Church under the auspices of an ordained pastor; and be it further

Resolved, That an appointed task force determine appropriate requirements so that the office of deacon be included in the roster of commissioned ministers, including such considerations as certification, standardized educational requirements, and ability to receive a call; and be it finally

Resolved, That the requirements determined by the task force be shared with the Synod's districts, at which time all men who have met these requirements are to be added to the roster of the Synod as commissioned ministers—deacons.

St. Mark
Kentwood, MI

13-45

To Affirm, Encourage, and Expand Supervised Ministry of Licensed Deacons

WHEREAS, God has called us (1 Cor. 1:9, 7:15; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 1:8a–9; 1 Pet. 2:9, 21; 5:10); and

WHEREAS, God sends called Christians to proclaim the Gospel (Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:46–47; John 20:19–23; Acts 1:8); and

WHEREAS, God has established the Office of the Public Ministry to strengthen and equip His people for the work of ministry (John 20:19–23; Eph. 4:11–13); and

WHEREAS, God also calls laypeople to serve with pastors in performing works of ministry (Acts 6:1–6; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 4:11–12; 2 Tim. 2:1–2; 1 Pet. 2:9); and

WHEREAS, The 1989 LCMS convention empowered the congregations of the LCMS to expand their ministry through the training and use of lay ministers/licensed deacons; and

WHEREAS, The ministry of licensed deacons has assisted greatly in maintaining and expanding Word and Sacrament ministry in many remote or transportation-isolated areas which cannot be served by a full-time pastor because congregations are too small to afford a pastor, has assisted with new mission plants not served by any ordained pastors, and has assisted pastors in large and growing congregations; and

WHEREAS, Those serving as licensed deacons have grown in their faith and many of the men have entered the seminary to pursue pastoral ministry; and

WHEREAS, Licensed deacons do not appoint themselves to administer Word and Sacrament but instead are called to service by their congregations through action of their voters' assemblies following the example of Acts 6:1–6, satisfying concerns about Augsburg XIV that those who administer the Sacraments and proclaim the Word are to be "rightly called"; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention affirm and encourage districts, circuits, and congregations to support ministries and mission work served by supervised licensed deacons; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention reject attempts to restrict or cancel district-authorized ministries served by licensed deacons who are supervised by ordained pastors; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention reject attempts to force licensed deacons to enter the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program when this would restrict, hinder, or stop ongoing Word and Sacrament ministry in local congregations and mission areas; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention again affirm the actions by the 1989 and 2001 conventions to reaffirm the ministry of licensed deacons; and be it finally

Resolved, That the delegates to the 2016 LCMS convention rise to thank the Lord of the harvest for the many gifts and blessings He has bestowed on our congregations and local ministries through the dedicated and faithful service of licensed deacons.

Faith
Juneau, AK

13-46

To Affirm Licensed Deacon Program

WHEREAS, The licensed deacon program has been a great blessing to many individuals and congregations of the LCMS who have been served by licensed deacons, and who otherwise might well not have received any Word and Sacrament care and spiritual nourishment because of the remote nature of their congregations or the inability of their congregations to support an ordained pastor; and

WHEREAS, All licensed deacons are duly trained and licensed for service under the supervision of ordained LCMS pastors; and

WHEREAS, A recommendation is coming to this convention to effectively eliminate the licensed deacon program of ministry within our Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod in convention thank God for the effective ministry of licensed deacons over the years in various districts of our Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That Synod continue to support and encourage the faithful and effective ministry of the licensed deacon program, under the guidance and supervision of duly ordained LCMS pastors.

Zion
Portland, OR

13-47

To Establish Licensed Deacon Program as Regular Approved Word and Sacrament Ministry

WHEREAS, Following the 1847 formation of the Synod, a combination of migration and additional immigration, largely economically driven, led to thousands of congregations being established in many small communities all over the USA; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has subsequently established geographic regions encompassing states and districts as follows: Great Plains, Great Lakes (roughly the upper Midwest and states adjacent to western Great Lakes), Central, East-Southeast, and West-Southwest (respectively, roughly the lower Midwest states and both east coast and west coast states) with roughly equal numbers of congregations, notwithstanding numbers of members; and

WHEREAS, Economically driven rural-to-urban migration has subsequently occurred from many of these small communities, affecting the congregations in them. The result is many rural congregations are approaching financial nonviability because of decreased membership, diminished financial base, and now-oversized physical campuses. Unsustainable finances make calling full-time ordained pastors very

difficult in competition with urban and suburban locations with larger populations and financial foundations; and

WHEREAS, The Central, East-Southeast, and West-Southwest Regions, under Synod convention authorization for licensed deacons, have opted to utilize this program to provide Word and Sacrament ministry largely under direct supervision of ordained LCMS pastors. Approximately 60 percent of rostered congregations and 85 percent of all licensed deacons are in these three regions; and

WHEREAS, The Great Lakes and Great Plains Regions also likely have similar situations geographically, demographically, and financially. But for philosophical reasons and other dynamics such as cultural environment, these two regions have largely not utilized the licensed deacon program, with some exceptions; and

WHEREAS, Where licensed deacons tend to serve, congregations frequently experience pastoral vacancies for long periods of up to several years and resort to calling pastors to multiple congregations to provide fundamental Word and Sacrament service. Many dual parishes exist and can even be triple or quadruple congregations. Priority on Word and Sacrament service precludes many other duties simply for lack of time and resources; and

WHEREAS, There are synodwide shortages of trained and ordained pastors, which is frequently more acute in regions with fewer active Lutherans and large geographic areas; and

WHEREAS, There is an ongoing need for licensed lay deacons to provide relief and/or support, either for congregations with vacancies or for pastors requiring time off, by providing Word and Sacrament ministry; and

WHEREAS, There is a demand for trained men to perform duties and assist pastors on a regular basis with visitation of the elderly, shut-ins, care centers, and others separated from the church body to provide worship, Communion, and fellowship. Licensed lay deacons are especially valuable during vacancies; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod permanently adopt and support the licensed deacon program to support individuals, pastors, and congregations to ensure that God's Word and the Means of Grace are being administered to all His people.

Messiah
Prosser, WA

13-48

To Bring End to District Licensed Lay Deacon Programs

WHEREAS, Our Lutheran Confessions state that "no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called" (AC XIV); and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture sets high standards for the theological aptitude of pastors, that they be "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2) and "able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9), and that "not many of you should become teachers, my brothers" (James 3:1); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has two fine residential seminaries, as well as a nonresidential Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program; therefore be it

Resolved, That the various district "licensed lay deacon" programs, where they are being used to prepare laypeople to serve in place of a regularly called pastor, be brought to an end by July 14, 2017.

St. Matthew
Bonne Terre, MO

13-49

To Uphold Our Stated Confession of Office of the Ministry

WHEREAS, We are called to speak the truth in love; and

WHEREAS, Practices of individual congregations have the potential to affect our entire Synodical Union and others in fellowship with us around the world; and

WHEREAS, The Augsburg Confession, one of our Synodical Union's subscribed confessions, states in Article XIV (14) under the title "ecclesiastical order" that "our churches teach that nobody should preach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless he is regularly called"; and

WHEREAS, The Synodical Union has always recognized the theological truth and ability for a nonordained person to administer Baptism in an emergency; and

WHEREAS, There is a need to see that pastors in the pulpit are properly prepared; and

WHEREAS, There are currently means to be regularly called for public preaching and administering the Sacraments, such as the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program and training from our Synod's seminaries; therefore be it

Resolved, That congregations with lay men (nonordained men) not under a supervisor in a field education or vicarage program who are preparing sermons and preaching publicly and/or administering the sacraments be instructed by their district presidents, for the sake of the Gospel and our agreed confession, to stop no later than October 1, 2016; and be it further

Resolved, That all LCMS district training programs preparing lay men to preach publicly and administer the sacraments in the church be brought to an end no later than October 1, 2016; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Montana District in convention memorialize the Synod in convention in 2016 to make this resolution its own.

Montana District

13-50

To Develop Better Understanding of Office of Public Ministry

WHEREAS, Art. XIV of the Augsburg Confession states, "Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call" (*Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, p. 41); and

WHEREAS, In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XIV, the confessors were primarily dealing with the Refutation's call for "canonical ordination" rather than with the concept of "rightly ordered call"; and

WHEREAS, The matter of who prescribes a proper ordination is taken up in the Smalcald Articles' article regarding "Ordination and Call," and simply states, "as the ancient examples of the Church and

the fathers teach us, we ourselves should ordain suitable persons to this office" (*ibid.*, p. 412); and

WHEREAS, In the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Luther writes, "[67] Wherever the Church is, there is the authority to administer the Gospel. Therefore, it is necessary for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers. This authority is a gift that in reality is given to the Church. No human power can take this gift away from the Church" (*ibid.*, p. 438); and

WHEREAS, The right to call and the right to determine who is "rightly called" is placed into the hands of the Church to determine in accordance to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions only; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has struggled with the matter of licensed lay deacons/ministers for a number of years, culminating in the recommendations of the 2013 Res. 4-06A Task Force's Report to the Synod which, in effect, essentially eliminates this "office" that was earlier adopted by the Synod in convention; and

WHEREAS, A number of alternative routes to "ordination" have been adopted by Synod in order to provide pastors in a variety of settings (e.g., specific ministry pastor [SMP], Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology [EIIT], Hispanic School of Theology) that differ in requirements for application and course work to be completed; and

WHEREAS, There is such disagreement over the implications of the Office of Public Ministry within the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention establish a task force regarding the study of the Scriptures, Confessions, and Walther's *Kirche und Amt* (Church and Ministry) which state the doctrine of the Synod, for the express purpose of providing

- (1) consensus on what the term "rightly called" actually conveys;
- (2) determination of whether a set, singular curriculum should be presented for any person preparing for the Office of Public Ministry;
- (3) consideration of whether there can or should exist differing "levels" of ordination into the Office of Public Ministry (e.g., specific ministry pastors unable to serve beyond the specific ministry to which they are called while an EIIT graduate is eligible to serve the church-at-large).

and be it further

Resolved, That this task force be made up of one (1) professor from each of the LCMS seminaries; one (1) district president; three (3) members of the LCMS CTCR, to include the executive director; and four (4) parish pastors from each of the Synod's "regions" who have participated as mentors in the SMP, licensed lay deacon, EIIT, or Hispanic School of Theology programs; and be it finally

Resolved, That this task force prepare and present its report to the Synod no later than August 2018 for dissemination, discussion, and debate prior to the 2019 LCMS convention.

Circuit 16, Southeastern District; Circuit 17, Southeastern District

FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

14. Church and Culture

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R11, R59

OVERTURES

14-01

To Establish a Legal Defense Fund

WHEREAS, Society at large is becoming increasingly hostile to the truth of the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, The state is increasingly seeking to “turn its coercive powers on the church and hinder its mission”¹; and

WHEREAS, Rostered church workers and church entities are increasingly vulnerable to lawsuits and potentially even prison time¹ for their defense of the Gospel; therefore be it

Resolved, That the English District memorialize the LCMS to establish a legal defense fund to aid in the defense of rostered church workers or church entities who come under legal attack for their witness to God’s truth.

¹LCMS President Matthew Harrison, quoted in: “Harrison encourages LCMS to ‘not grow weary’ in public square” (*Reporter Online*; blogs.lcms.org/2014/not-grow-weary, accessed 11/18/14).

English District
Farmington, MI

14-02

To Address Public Issues Strongly

WHEREAS, The mission work abroad that our Synod has been developing over the last few years is appreciated; and

WHEREAS, The strong stand that our Synod has taken in defending religious freedom in our nation is a blessing; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod has been very supportive of the sanctity of marriage and of the proper definition of marriage as a lifelong union of one man and one woman; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod has been a very strong voice for the sanctity of life; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District convention memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to continue and expand mission work at home and abroad, and that it encourage a continued focus at home on mercy, witness, and life together; and be it further

Resolved, That the Wyoming District convention memorialize the LCMS convention to continue this strong defense of religious freedom, and that it continue to support the biblical doctrines of the two kingdoms regarding the relationship between church and state; and be it further

Resolved, That the Wyoming District convention memorialize the LCMS convention to continue an aggressive and continued support of marriage based on the revelation of God in the Scriptures; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Wyoming District convention also memorialize the LCMS convention to continue as a very strong voice for the sanctity of life, especially supporting the truth that life begins at conception and is therefore deserving of our protection and care.

Wyoming District

14-03

To Declare It Contrary to Scripture to Join in Prayer with Those Who Deny Jesus Christ

WHEREAS, The 2004 LCMS convention did resolve “to commend the CTCR document *Guidelines for Participation in Civic Events* for study to help pastors, teachers, and church workers make decisions about participation in civic events” (Res. 3-06A); and

WHEREAS, For the sake of our own consciences and for a testimony to future generations, we want to give clear testimony to our faith in Jesus Christ as the only way to the true God, as clearly revealed in 1 John 2:23 and confessed in the Large Catechism (LC II 66); therefore be it

Resolved, No resolution, guideline, or program, whether it be resolved, accepted, or promoted by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod or one of its districts, is understood by the 2016 LCMS convention to command, allow, or encourage a Christian to join in prayer with those who deny Jesus Christ is the only way to the true God.

Zion
Chippewa Falls, WI

14-04

To Change Name of Synod to Concordia Lutheran Synod

WHEREAS, In 1874 the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States was founded to be the uniquely faithful and confessional Lutheran church body in the United States; and

WHEREAS, From its founding the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States sought other faithful and confessional church bodies with which to share fellowship; and

WHEREAS, In order to better proclaim the Gospel and prepare its members for the Christian life, the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States began transitioning to bilingual as early as 1885; and

WHEREAS, The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States marked its centennial by changing its name to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the end of the twentieth century The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has become the pinnacle of uniquely faithful and confessional Lutheran theology and practice; and

WHEREAS, The dawn of the twenty-first century has brought church bodies across the globe to the door of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for education and guidance; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has taken great strides in facilitating global education and reaching out through missions; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and other Lutheran church bodies have sought doctrinal unity and altar and pulpit fellowship, and have begun many dialogues to achieve such fellowship; and

WHEREAS, The priorities of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are (1) to plant, sustain, and revitalize distinctly Lutheran churches; (2) to support and expand theological education; (3) to perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministry; (4) to collaborate with the Synod’s members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness; (5) to nurture pastors, missionaries,

and professional church workers to promote spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being; and (6) to enhance early childhood, elementary and secondary education, and youth ministry; and

WHEREAS, The current name of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod creates confusion concerning its geographical outreach into the world; and

WHEREAS, The proposed change to “Concordia Lutheran Synod” emphasizes and encourages the global perspective of our Synod; and

WHEREAS, “Concordia Lutheran Synod” bears our priorities in its name, literally “With One Heart as Lutherans We Walk Together”; therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod change its name to “Concordia Lutheran Synod.”

Monroe Circuit
Michigan District

14-05

To Identify and Respond to Incursions against Religious Freedoms by Radical Elements of Islam

WHEREAS, LCMS congregations accept 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 (Constitution, Art. II); and

WHEREAS, The teachings and practices of Islam are in direct opposition to our faith and teaching (i.e., “Infidels now are they who say, ‘Verily God is the Messiah, Son of Mary’” [The Qur’an, Sura 5, 19]); and

WHEREAS, One of the stated duties of the LCMS is to “[p]rovide protection for congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers in the performance of their official duties and the maintenance of their rights” (Constitution, Art. III 9); and

WHEREAS, Radical elements of Islam are dedicated to the overthrow of democratic governments by violence and other means, which undermine the freedoms of religion and speech we are guaranteed in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS dedicate resources to addressing the incursions of Islam in our legal system; and be it further

Resolved, That LCMS members be kept informed of the defense of our faith in the legal and political spheres by appropriate agencies of the Synod (i.e., “Free to Be Faithful” and the new office in Washington DC); and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of the South Wisconsin District continue to support actively the work of POBLO (People of the Book Lutheran Outreach) in its work of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people of the Islamic religion; and be it finally

Resolved, That upon its approval, this resolution be submitted for deliberation at the 66th Regular Convention of the LCMS in Milwaukee in 2016.

South Wisconsin District

14-06

To Encourage the Synod to Bear Witness to What We Believe, Teach, and Confess re Marriage

WHEREAS, Relying upon the Holy Scriptures, we believe, teach, and confess that marriage as instituted by God is a lifelong union of one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4–6); and

WHEREAS, Marriage is to be honored by all and kept pure (Heb. 13:4; 1 Thess. 4:2–5); and

WHEREAS, Children are the most obvious, natural gift of marriage, for God blessed the first married couple—and all married couples—by saying, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28); and

WHEREAS, St. Paul describes marriage as a type of the relationship existing between Christ and His Bride: “This mystery [of marriage] is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32); and

WHEREAS, On its own, the Church can do nothing; but if the Church abides in Christ and Christ in the Church, it bears much fruit (John 15:5); and

WHEREAS, It is thus with marriage—only a union of a man and a woman can be fruitful and multiply; and

WHEREAS, Marriage thus understood also blesses children by giving them a father and a mother to nurture and care for them—making it the optimal setting for the child; and

WHEREAS, Sexual complement is therefore the foundation of the biblical view of marriage as God intended it; and

WHEREAS, Although solidly grounded in a scriptural understanding of God’s design, this “conjugal view” of marriage is not unique in the world to Christian cultures, as nearly every culture has recognized this view of marriage, and it has been foundational to the ordering of civil society from time immemorial; and

WHEREAS, The left-hand kingdom’s subscription to the conjugal view of marriage should come as no surprise, because St. Paul also tells us that God’s invisible attributes, including His views of what is ungodly or unrighteous, may be clearly seen as reflected in His creation (Rom. 1:18–20); and

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures also explicitly teach that same-sex attraction is a manifestation of sin (Lev. 18:22 [“abomination”]; Rom. 1:26–27 [“dishonorable” and “shameless”]; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:8–11 [“contrary to sound doctrine”]); and

WHEREAS, The official position of the LCMS, as set forth in 1998 Res. 3-21 (“To Affirm the Sanctity of Marriage and to Reject Same-Sex Unions”), is that homosexual unions come under categorical prohibition in the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 18:22, 24; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; 1 Tim. 1:9–10) as contrary to the Creator’s design (Rom. 1:26–27); and

WHEREAS, St. Paul also cautions us that sexual sins are no greater and no lesser than any other sins (Rom. 1:26–32), as all sins separate us from God and are deserving of eternal death (Rom. 1:32; 6:23); and

WHEREAS, In recent years, our culture has seen a shift in attitudes about marriage, with same-sex “marriage” and civil unions now considered by many to be morally acceptable and legally desirable; and

WHEREAS, The Supreme Court of the United States decided on June 26, 2015, that the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States requires the states to license marriages between two people of the same sex, and to recognize such marriages contracted elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, The Solicitor General of the United States has declared that, if the Supreme Court compels states to recognize same-sex relationships as marriages, “it is going to be an issue” for groups and

individuals who object to same-sex marriage on religious grounds, including but not limited to the possible revocation of tax-exempt status for such groups and the legal requirement that such individuals act contrary to the dictates of conscience; and

WHEREAS, At the Diet of Worms (on April 18, 1521), Martin Luther declared, “I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe”; and

WHEREAS, Our consciences also are captive to the Word of God; and

WHEREAS, The Word of God teaches that, as citizens of God’s left-hand kingdom, we must obey our government (Rom. 13:1–4; LC III 141–42, 150; AC XVI 1); however, when the government interferes with the rights of conscience and the clear commands of Scripture, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29; AC XVI 6–7); and

WHEREAS, It is the role of the universal Church to proclaim boldly the Gospel of forgiveness, and to teach and confess boldly the truths revealed in the Scriptures; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2015 Indiana District convention affirm its adherence to 1998 LCMS Res. 3-21 (“To Affirm the Sanctity of Marriage and to Reject Same-Sex Unions”) as a faithful exposition of the Scripture passages cited therein; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2015 Indiana District convention thank LCMS President Matthew C. Harrison and the LCMS “Free to be Faithful” campaign for standing up for religious freedom and the rights of conscience, including but not limited to the right to boldly teach and confess the Scriptural truth concerning the institution of marriage, and encourage them to continue in their bold witness; and be it further

Resolved, That the Indiana District reaffirm our commitment to teaching both the Law and Gospel concerning marriage, both calling our nation and those struggling with same-sex attraction to repentance and proclaiming the Gospel of Christ’s forgiveness to all who call upon Christ’s name; and be it finally

Resolved, That the 2015 Indiana District convention memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to develop a comprehensive response to recent court decisions concerning marriage that will comport with the Holy Scriptures and the traditional Lutheran understanding of marriage, including but not limited to the role of LCMS pastors acting as agents of the state and conducting a marriage ceremony.

Indiana District

14-07

To Give Witness to Inseparability of Marriage, Life, and Family

Preamble

On June 26, 2015, in a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court of the United States of America struck down every state marriage law that is based on the complementarities of male and female. That same day, the Synod President Matthew Harrison responded with an official statement that plainly stated that the Supreme Court got it wrong. In that same statement, President Harrison drew the connection to a similarly activist and erroneous ruling of *Roe v. Wade*, which struck down state laws prohibiting elective abortions.

The parallel between these two Supreme Court rulings is not only clear from a constitutional standpoint, but they are also related from a theological standpoint. Marriage, life, and family are intertwined in a perichoretic [interpenetrating] relationship to one another. Our God designed it this way from the beginning of creation. It was no

coincidence that the first “no-fault” divorce laws were sweeping through the United States in the years just prior to the issuance of *Roe v. Wade*. Nor is same-sex marriage unrelated to the attacks on marriage, life, and family, which have undermined American society for well over a half century.

To be sure, these are civil concerns, but they are also deeply spiritual. While the state must make laws concerning marriage, marriage is an institution which exists prior to—and independent of—the state. Hence there are also weighty reasons for the Church to speak boldly and clearly at this critical moment. To name three:

1. Catechesis: Civil laws tend to teach attitudes and values to citizens with a force and pervasiveness that can easily overwhelm the teaching voice of the Church. When the civil laws are in basic agreement with the laws of God, we receive them as welcome allies in the catechetical endeavor. But when civil laws are directly contradictory of divine law, it is incumbent upon the Church to denounce openly and powerfully unjust public laws for the catechesis of her membership. Such is the case now, both with regard to marriage and the sanctity of human life.

2. Citizenship: In addition to general catechesis, the Church also has a mandate from God to instruct various people in all walks of life how the Word of God should be lived out in their particular vocation. John the Baptist so taught when he was approached by tax collectors and soldiers (Luke 3:12–14). Also Martin Luther, in the Small Catechism, teaches the same: “Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker?” From the beginning of Christendom, the Church of God has followed the example of John the Baptist in holding rulers and authorities to the same accountability as those who do not hold public office. For calling King Herod to conform to God’s word on marriage, John was beheaded. Later, St. Ambrose risked his own life to call Emperor Theodosius to repentance for mass murder. What makes our American context somewhat unique is that every citizen over the age of 18 holds a public office. Voters exercise authority under the American Constitution and so the Church in America has a greater responsibility and a greater opportunity to teach the proper exercise of suffrage than practically any other time or place in ecclesiastical history.

3. Repentance: In addition to catechesis for her members, the Church is also called to mission. This means that we are to call all sinners to repentance that they might escape from the wrath to be revealed when Jesus comes again in glory. Again, in the case of many sins, our call to repentance resonates with the civil laws themselves. But in the case of both marriage and the sanctity of human life, we no longer speak in line with society but precisely against it. For this reason, we ought to take every opportunity as a synod to redouble our support for all who would reach out to their neighbor with the message of repentance and forgiveness.

We, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, recognize the great need to give an unambiguous and unyielding witness to the truth of marriage, life, and family at this critical juncture in history; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS reaffirm the clear and unalterable teaching of God through the Holy Scriptures that marriage is a permanent and sexually exclusive union between one man and one woman (Gen. 2:21–25; Matt. 19:4–6; Eph. 5:22–33); and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS publicly confess that God Himself “made them male and female” (Gen. 1:27). As we address those who struggle with gender identity disorder in mercy and love, we do so within the truth of biblical anthropology that there are only two

genders in the human race, and that these are given by the Creator and not subject to alteration by His creatures; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS reaffirm that every single human life is a direct gift of God from the moment of conception until God Himself takes it away in death. Since every Christian is called to “help and protect his neighbor in every bodily need” (SC I), we first of all recognize marriage and family as the divinely designed arena for the defense of life; next, when God gives life outside of marriage and family, we commit with all our hearts and resources to defend, support, and nurture such lives while condemning elective abortion in every circumstance; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage all the educational endeavors of our congregations—preschools, grade schools, and high school associations—to find joy in catechizing our youth concerning marriage, life, and family, in clear distinction from the culture that surrounds them; and be it further

Resolved, That we endeavor to see marriage, life, and family as a kind of holy trinity wherein neither of these issues is fully addressed and understood unless it is seen in the light of the other two. We intend to strengthen our defense of human life and holy marriage by reflecting deeply upon the essential unity of these three gifts of God; and be it further

Resolved, That toward this end, the Synod encourage all ministers and congregations to devote significant time to the study of God’s design and purpose for marriage—in particular, to deepen understanding and heighten our mutual affirmation that marriage is not only a moral issue but a profoundly theological reality. Let us, as the Bride of Christ, pray to our heavenly Groom that He might show us ever more clearly the Gospel made manifest in godly marriage; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage Concordia Publishing House to publish books for both laity and church workers that will help and assist our study of marriage, life, and family; and be it finally

Resolved, That we direct the two seminaries of our Synod to examine their curriculum, making sure that future pastors are equipped to proclaim the centrality of marriage, life, and family to the Gospel; also that they each produce materials that can serve to deepen and enhance the theological and Gospel-oriented understanding of these matters for all parish pastors.

Board of Directors
Wyoming District

14-08

To Support Holy Marriage at Every Level of Our Life Together

Preamble

The radical redefinition of marriage and its ripple effects throughout American culture is more than a recent innovation. From the very dawn of creation, Satan has tempted man to reject both the Word of our Creator and the realities of creation itself. Soon after our Lord’s resurrection, ancient Gnosticism mounted this assault, which has continued in various forms through two millennia. Recent decades have seen its resurgence under the banner of the “Sexual Revolution.” *Obergefell v. Hodges* did not create something new but took the Gnostic heresy of the “Sexual Revolution” to its next logical step. There will be more steps to follow.

The introduction of “same-sex marriage” not only causes a cultural crisis but also provides a great opportunity for the Christian Church. Christ’s people always thrive under the cross. As Martin

Luther wrote in one of his great Reformation hymns, “God’s Word shines brighter through the cross; and purified from human dross, it shines through every nation” (cf. *TLH* 260, st. 5). Under the cross, we receive the gift of repentance together with a direct view of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

By embracing our opportunity to repent, we will see ever more clearly the glory of God’s revelation. Therefore, as individual Christians and as congregations and pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, let us walk together in humble repentance and bold confession of Christ’s glorious mysteries.

Through the travesty of “same-sex marriage,” we are given to see the damage done to home and family by models of marriage that elevate the selfish pleasures of adults above the needs of the small and weak. We see pain and death caused by the mad scramble for sexual pleasure that rejects the gift of children. In the process, we have been given to see that not only “same-sex marriage” but also nonbiblical divorce, cohabitation, pornography, and sexual promiscuity partake of this same selfish view of marriage. As we reflect on these connections, repent of our participation in them, and seek God’s help to do better, therefore be it

Resolved, That we confess with joy that Jesus has healed marriage in ways that the people under the Old Testament could not fathom (John 2:1–11). Thus we renounce the error of the Pharisees in Matthew 19 who considered divorce not as a tragedy but as a benefit bestowed by Moses. We rededicate ourselves to teaching and encouraging the use of Jesus’ Gospel gifts in addressing even the most strained marriages between Christians; and be it further

Resolved, That we repent of our sins as individuals that undermine the holy institution of marriage: cohabitation, infidelity, divorce, pornography, filthy talk, and the like. We stand together in support of every minister and congregation that is seeking to address these offenses in their midst, encouraging them in their faithful proclamation of the Gospel; and be it further

Resolved, That we direct each district to establish and implement guidelines that assist congregations to have a continuity of ministry with members who seek to transfer from one congregation to another in the face of separation and divorce; and be it finally

Resolved, That we direct the Council of Presidents to work together in establishing a protocol to help congregations of the Synod to have a continuity of ministry with members who move across district boundary lines in cases of separation and divorce.

Board of Directors
Wyoming District

14-09

To Request Changes in *LSB Agenda’s* Rite of Marriage

WHEREAS, There is a broad shift within our culture to accept same-sex marriage; and

WHEREAS, The Word of God only knows of marriage as the joining of a man and a woman to be one flesh by action of God; and

WHEREAS, All rites used in the church teach; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS Board for National Mission, in consultation with Concordia Publishing House, revise the language of the wedding rite in future editions of the *Lutheran Service Book*, *Pastoral Care Companion*, and *LSB Agenda* (along the lines of the examples given) to more pointedly express marriage of one man and one woman, so as to guard against any possible re-reading of the text

that would intend to allow or support the false concept of same-sex marriage; and be it further

Resolved, That the Northern Illinois District submit this resolution to the 2016 LCMS convention for its consideration and adoption.

Examples of changes needed:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Holy Matrimony

(Taken from pp. 64–70 of Lutheran Service Book: Agenda)

General Notes

1. Holy Matrimony is the union of a man and a woman. Under no circumstances is this rite or any other form of blessing to be used for any other type of union.
2. The rite of Holy Matrimony may be used at the beginning of the Divine Service or Daily Office. It may also stand by itself as an independent order of service.
3. If the rite is used at the beginning of the Divine Service, it comes before the Introit, Psalm, or Entrance Hymn. If it is used at the beginning of the Daily Office (Matins or Morning Prayer, Vespers or Evening Prayer), it precedes the opening versicles or psalmody.
4. Because of the solemn character of Holy Week, it is inappropriate to schedule a marriage during that time.
5. When used within the Divine Service, Holy Communion is offered to all eligible communicants and is not to be limited to the bride and bridegroom or the wedding party.
6. As in all worship in the house of God, the rite of Holy Matrimony invokes the presence and blessing of God. Therefore, it should avoid triteness and empty sentimentality.
7. Music selected for this rite should embody high standards of quality and be within the ability of the performers. The music should reflect the praise of God and His steadfast love in Christ as the foundation and model for marriage.
8. This rite is a more complete version of the corresponding rite in *Lutheran Service Book*, pages 275–277.

Stand

At the conclusion of the procession to the foot of the chancel, the pastor says:

P In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God and before His Church to witness the union of this man and this woman in holy matrimony. This is an honorable estate instituted and blessed by God in Paradise, before humanity's fall into sin.

In marriage we see a picture of the communion between Christ and His bride, the Church. Our Lord blessed and honored marriage with His presence and first miracle at Cana in Galilee. This estate is also commended to us by the apostle Paul as good and honorable. Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into inadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for the mutual companionship, help, and support that each person ought to receive from the other, both in prosperity and adversity. Marriage was also ordained so that man and woman may find delight in one another. Therefore, all persons who marry shall take a spouse every man who marries shall take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust, for God has not called us to impurity but in holiness. God also established marriage for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the fear and instruction of the Lord so that they may offer Him their praise.

For these reasons God has established the holy estate that name of man and name of woman wish to enter. ~~They~~ This man and this

woman desire our prayers as they begin their marriage in the Lord's name and with His blessing.

If this wedding rite is being used as an independent service (or when the rite precedes a regularly scheduled service of the congregation), the following or other appropriate passages from Holy Scripture are now read. Each reading may conclude with the response:

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Scripture Readings

When the rite stands alone, a sermon is also preached. A hymn may precede or follow. The wedding party may be seated throughout.

If the wedding party has been seated, they now stand and take their places before the chancel steps.

The pastor asks the bridegroom:

P Name of bridegroom, will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony as God ordained it? Will you nourish and cherish her as Christ loved His body, the Church, giving Himself up for her? Will you love, honor, and keep her in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, remain united to her alone, so long as you both shall live? Then say: I will.

R I will.

The pastor asks the bride:

P Name of bride, will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony as God ordained it? Will you submit to him as the Church submits to Christ? Will you love, honor, and keep him in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, remain united to him alone, so long as you both shall live? Then say: I will.

R I will.

If the bride is being given in marriage, the pastor may ask:

P Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

R We/I do.

The pastor may address the parents of the bridegroom and bride as follows:

P Do you give your consent and blessing to this couple man and this woman? Then say: We do.

R We do.

P Will you pray for and encourage name and name in their marriage, remembering at all times that God wills them to live within their vows until they are parted by death? Then say: We will.

R We will.

The pastor leads the bridegroom and bride to the altar. The bridegroom, taking the right hand of the bride and facing her, says after the pastor:

I, name of the man, take you name of the woman, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy will; and I pledge to you my faithfulness.

The bride, in the same way, says after the pastor:

I, name of the woman, take you name of the man, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy will; and I pledge to you my faithfulness.

The rings are presented to the pastor; then the following prayer is said:

P Almighty Father, You have generously created all things to serve us for our good. Send your blessing upon this couple man and this woman who shall wear these rings as a constant reminder of their marital fidelity. Grant that by Your mercy they may live gladly and faithfully in this holy estate; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

The bridegroom and bride exchange rings beginning with the bride-

groom. While giving the ring, each says after the pastor one of the following:

Receive this ring as a pledge and token of wedded love and faithfulness. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

With this ring I marry you, my worldly goods I give to you, and with my body I honor you. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The couple kneels

P Now that name and name have committed themselves to each other in holy matrimony, have given themselves to each other by their solemn pledges, and have declared the same before God and these witnesses, I pronounce them to be husband and wife, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P What God has joined together, let no one put asunder.

C Amen.

The pastor blesses the couple.

P The almighty and gracious God abundantly grant you His favor and sanctify and bless you with the blessing given to Adam and Eve in Paradise, that you may please Him in both body and soul and live together in holy love until your life's end.

C Amen.

If this rite precedes the Divine Service, the service continues with the Introit, Psalm, or Entrance Hymn. If this rite precedes the Daily Office, the service continues with the opening versicles or psalmody. If this rite stands by itself as an independent service, it concludes with the following. The bridegroom and bride remain kneeling.

Stand

P Let us pray.

Almighty, everlasting God, our heavenly Father, grant that by Your blessing name and name may live together according to Your Word and promise. Strengthen them in faithfulness and love toward each other. Sustain and defend them in every trial and temptation. Help them to live in faith toward You, in the communion of Your holy Church, and in loving service to each other that they may ever enjoy Your heavenly blessing; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Benediction

The wedding party departs in procession to the accompaniment of appropriate music.

Northern Illinois District

14-10

To Consider Ceasing to Act as Agents of the Governing Authority re Marriage Certificates

WHEREAS, The LCMS understands that marriage is an institution established by God for the benefit of all men and women (Gen. 2:24); and

WHEREAS, The Synod recognizes that God grants governing authorities jurisdiction over matters related to maintaining good order within society, such as the legalization of marriage (Rom. 13:1); and

WHEREAS, The Synod's pastors are legal agents of each state's administration of marriage licenses when performing marriages; and

WHEREAS, Governing authorities are diverging from the scriptural understanding of marriage; and

WHEREAS, The Synod's pastors may have to compromise their faith practice and the sovereignty of God's Word to comply with each state's legal requirements of marriage administration; therefore be it

Resolved, That pastors of the LCMS consider ceasing to act as agents of the governing authority with regard to signing marriage certificates.

SELC District

14-11

To Encourage Pastors and Congregations to Administer Marriage Faithfully

WHEREAS, The estate of marriage is a creation of God before mankind's fall into sin (Gen. 1:27–28; Gen. 2:18–26) as the unique relationship of a man and a woman ordered toward mutual help and companionship and the procreation of children; and

WHEREAS, The estate of marriage is distinct from and precedes the estates of church and government (LC I 207–8); and

WHEREAS, A marriage is effected by the mutual consent of a man and a woman to live together as husband and wife (Gen. 2:23–24; Walther; Pieper) and not by an act of the state or the church; and

WHEREAS, The administration of marriage is properly a civil affair and not a church affair (Martin Luther, *The Order of Marriage for Common Pastors*, AE 53, p. 112), and any involvement of the church in administration is of human arrangement (AC XXVIII 29; Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 77); and

WHEREAS, The church's duty with respect to marriage is to bless it with God's Word and pray for the married couple (Martin Luther, *The Order of Marriage for Common Pastors*, AE 53, pp. 112ff); and

WHEREAS, With the Word of God and prayer, a marriage is sanctified to be a picture of Christ and His Bride, the Church (Eph. 5:22–33); and

WHEREAS, The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that marriages may be contracted between two persons of the same sex; and

WHEREAS, Such unions destroy the picture of Christ's love for the Church and are a matter of grave offense before God (Rom. 1:26–27; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; 1 Tim. 1:8–11); and

WHEREAS, Jesus affirms that in the beginning God created marriage as the union of a man and a woman (Matt. 19:3–9); therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS in convention affirm marriage as God's creation as the exclusive union of a man and a woman; and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors of the Synod be encouraged to deal compassionately with those who experience same-sex attraction and extol the blessings of biblical marriage as a cure that is given also for them; and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors of the Synod be discouraged from acting as agents of the state in solemnizing marriages and registering them with the state, thereby keeping distinct the duties of church and state with respect to marriage; and be it finally

Resolved, That each congregation be encouraged to develop policies for marriage in accord with the witness of Scripture and the Confessions.

Trinity

New Haven, MO

14-12

To Advise Ordained Ministers to Refrain from Solemnizing Marriages

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod understands that marriage is a temporal institution established by God for the benefit of all men and women; and

WHEREAS, The Synod recognizes that God grants jurisdiction over temporal institutions to temporal authorities; and

WHEREAS, The Synod is not a temporal authority; and

WHEREAS, The Synod desires to keep the temporal and spiritual realms distinct and separate from each other; and

WHEREAS, The Synod is instructed and restricted to the spiritual realm; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod advise its ordained ministers to refrain from solemnizing marriages on behalf of temporal authorities.

Saints Peter and Paul
Sharon, PA

14-13

To Encourage Congregations to Review and Update Policies Associated with Bible's Teaching on Marriage

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod holds unswervingly to the biblical teaching that marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman; and

WHEREAS, The legalization of same-sex marriage is putting increased pressure on faithful congregations to disregard our confession to accommodate this trend; and

WHEREAS, Legal challenges to the church on the issue of same-sex marriage are already happening and will likely continue in the future; and

WHEREAS, Many congregations need to write and/or update their marriage policies to state clearly the aforementioned teaching of biblical marriage; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has published sample statements affirming biblical marriage for policies for adoption by congregations; and

WHEREAS, Other policies also may need to be updated in order to properly confess the Bible's teaching on marriage, including but not limited to facilities use and employment policies; therefore be it

Resolved, That the congregations of the South Wisconsin District review their marriage policies and amend them to define marriage biblically as the union of one man and one woman; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations without marriage policies be encouraged to write one that is careful to specifically affirm the Bible's teaching on marriage; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations review all their policies and edit them to prohibit any activity that might endorse same-sex behavior and thus compromise the congregation's confession and integrity; and be it finally

Resolved, That upon approval of this resolution, it be forwarded to the 66th Regular Convention of the LCMS in Milwaukee in 2016.

South Wisconsin District

14-14

To Study Officiating of Marriages

WHEREAS, In conducting and presiding at marriages, ordained pastors of the LCMS act not only as ministers of the Gospel but also serve the state in performing weddings and signing the marriage license; and

WHEREAS, In our nation the legal definition and practice of marriage has changed to include such that rejects the biblical definition and practice to which our pastors can subscribe and conduct and remain faithful to God's Word and design; and

WHEREAS, Many pastors and congregations are seeking faithful and solid theological and legal advice on these issues; therefore be it

Resolved, That the CTCR study and report on the theology and practice of LCMS clergy officiating at weddings, providing guidelines for pastors and congregations in performing weddings and signing the legal licenses of the state, this study and report to be pursued with all diligence and urgency.

Board of Directors
Missouri District

14-15

To Inform Synod Members of Objectives of Islam

WHEREAS, "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14); and

WHEREAS, "[Satan] was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44); and

WHEREAS, Satan is "crafty" (Gen. 3:1) and deceptively and craftily changes God's Word (Gen. 3:1); and

WHEREAS, Satan lies (Gen. 3:5); and

WHEREAS, Satan's words are "a delight to the eyes" and "desired to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6); and

WHEREAS, "Everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:16); and

WHEREAS, Our own sinful nature opposes the good and gracious will of God ("I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature" [Rom. 7:18]); and

WHEREAS, The devil, the world, and our sinful nature try to mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great sins (cf. Luther's Small Catechism; 1 Pet. 5:8–9; Prov. 1:10; Matt. 18:7; Gal. 5:17; 2 Cor. 4:8); and

WHEREAS, The purity of the Gospel is to be maintained (John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:21; Rom. 3:4; 2 Cor. 10:5; Col. 2:8; Rev. 22:18–19); therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, through official communications, clearly inform its members (congregations, ministers of religion—ordained, and ministers of religion—commissioned) of the objectives of Islam.

Circuit 8
Kansas District

14-16

To Provide Leadership in Matters of Marriage, Family, and Sexuality

WHEREAS, There is a great deal of confusion in society regarding God's good design for marriage, family, and human sexuality; and

WHEREAS, This seems to be a part of a larger ongoing decay in Christian values and mind-set in American society, as evidenced also in the official positions of other church bodies; and

WHEREAS, We are all sinners who constantly need forgiveness and correction; and

WHEREAS, Young people are especially subject to confusion and are poorly equipped to respond to these challenges, even in their own minds and personal conduct; and

WHEREAS, There is need for support and guidance to be offered to those who struggle with various sexual temptations and sins and yet want to live a faithful life in accordance with God's Word; and

WHEREAS, There is also a great need to reach out in love and compassion to those who are not troubled in their conscience about living and thinking in ways that are unfaithful to the Scriptures with regard to human sexuality; and

WHEREAS, There is a Synod task force already working on this; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South (MNS) District encourage the Synod, its seminaries, and its universities to put a high priority on providing leadership in this area; and be it further

Resolved, That pastors and congregations be implored to provide responsible pastoral care in this area through their preaching, teaching, and counseling; and be it finally

Resolved, That the MNS District memorialize the Synod to establish a full-time position to provide leadership in matters of marriage, family, and human sexuality.

Minnesota South District

14-17

To Inform Members re Deception of Alternative Sexual Lifestyles

WHEREAS, "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14); and

WHEREAS, "[Satan] was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44); and

WHEREAS, Satan is "crafty" (Gen. 3:1) and deceptively and craftily changes God's Word ("Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" [Gen. 3:1]); and

WHEREAS, Satan denies God's Word ("You will not surely die" [Gen. 3:4]); and

WHEREAS, Satan lies: "... your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5); and

WHEREAS, Satan's words are "a delight to the eyes" and "desired to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6); and

WHEREAS, "Everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:16); and

WHEREAS, Our own sinful nature opposes the good and gracious will of God ("I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature" [Rom. 7:18]); and

WHEREAS, The devil, the world, and our sinful nature try to mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great sins (cf. Luther's Small Catechism; 1 Pet. 5:8–9; Prov. 1:10; Matt. 18:7; Gal. 5:17; 2 Cor. 4:8); and

WHEREAS, The purity of the Gospel is to be maintained (John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:21; Rom. 3:4; 2 Cor. 10:5; Col. 2:8; Rev. 22:18–19; and especially Eph. 5:31–32); therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, through official communications, *clearly* inform its members (congregations, ministers of religion—ordained, and ministers of religion—commissioned) of the scriptural truths of male and female identity; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod, through official communications, *clearly* inform its members of the scriptural truths of marriage and its purposes; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod, through official communications, *clearly* inform its members of the scriptural truths of homosexuality, bisexuality, transgender identity, and other sexual identities that are contrary to Scripture.

Circuit 8

Kansas District

14-18

To Support Pastors and Laity in Firmly Confessing Biblical Understanding of Human Sexuality

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has repeatedly confessed the biblical teaching that marriage between one man and one woman is a blessed estate, and that sexual activity between any persons outside of biblical marriage, including those of the same sex, is contrary to the Word of God; and

WHEREAS, There is increasing pressure from our culture to accept LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, questioning, etc.) lifestyles as legitimate and God pleasing; and

WHEREAS, We are called as the church to stand *contra mundum* (against the world) as the apostle states, "They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:5–6); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Montana District memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to direct the Office of the President to see to the production of resources for church and civil realms using various media to assist pastors and laity in communicating in the spirit of truth and grace what Scripture teaches regarding sexual aberrations.

Montana District

14-19

To Encourage Church Members and Elected Officials to Value, Exercise, and Protect Religious Freedom

WHEREAS, Our freedom of religion is arguably our greatest freedom and the freedom upon which all the others depend; and

WHEREAS, One of the primary motives our forebears in the LCMS had for leaving their homeland and coming to the United States was the promise of greater religious freedom offered not just in the abstract but also in practice, thus allowing them to live out the implications of their Christian faith in daily life; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, we have witnessed numerous examples of government speech and action that have ignored or depreciated this fundamental right or sought to limit its scope—for example, by consistently referring to it in more restrictive terms such as our “freedom of worship”; and

WHEREAS, Many powerful interests within our culture (media, education, entertainment, and law) frequently portray the Christian faith as irrational and declare as illegitimate any attempt to allow that faith to inform a person’s words or actions in the public square; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South District (MNS) in convention express its great concern at the severe erosion of religious freedom; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage our state lawmakers to have a heightened awareness of this threat and to oppose any legislation or other action which would have the effect of continuing to diminish this right; and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage our state legislature to enact new legislation, similar to the federal “Religious Freedom Restoration Act,” that would further define and protect a robust understanding of what is meant by the concept of religious freedom; and be it further

Resolved, That pastors and congregations of the MNS District be encouraged to discuss frequently the meaning and importance of religious freedom; that they be encouraged to exercise their religious freedoms regularly and not be hesitant to speak out publicly on those select issues on which the church has historically spoken; and that they be encouraged regularly to include petitions in their public prayers calling on God to safeguard our religious liberty; and be it finally

Resolved, That the MNS District in convention memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to encourage these and similar efforts in every district.

Minnesota South District

14-20

To Encourage Intentional Leadership in Matters of Public Policy

Preamble

As Lutheran Christians, we have always followed Scripture’s lead in recognizing government as a good and God-ordained part of God’s created order (Rom. 13:1–7). We have followed Paul’s apostolic advice in offering prayers and other support for “our leaders and all in authority” so that, living in a peaceful and well-ordered society, the Gospel might be freely shared. We have understood this ordering to be “pleasing to God, who wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:2). Indeed, historically we have been very deferential to the authority of our elected and appointed governmental officials acting in their proper sphere of influence (kingdom of the left) even as they have been deferential to the church in its proper sphere (kingdom of the right). In the American context in particular, we have rarely felt it necessary or helpful to invest much denominational energy in trying overtly to influence government decisions. Even in those rare instances where we have felt such efforts to

be necessary, we have preferred to do so almost exclusively through the independent political activity of our individual members as they exercise their citizenship. Indeed, this remains our preferred mode of influence.

In recent years, however, it has become clear that something fundamental has changed in the relationship of church and state so that a relationship of mutual respect no longer exists. Which is to say, from the perspective of the church, it is clear that an increasingly secular state now views the church with great suspicion and with increasing frequency is making decisions that encroach on the sphere of the church and other mediating institutions of society, especially the family. In response to this changed circumstance, we offer the following resolution.

Proposed Action

WHEREAS, It has become obvious that the relationship of the church and the culture in which it carries out its ministry is increasingly marked by tension and conflict; and

WHEREAS, This conflict is making it increasingly difficult for the church to give a clear and unfettered witness to the words of Law and Gospel that she is called to proclaim; and

WHEREAS, The church is finding it increasingly difficult to carry out the acts of love and mercy which are also her calling; and

WHEREAS, This conflict and these restrictions are now more frequently expressed not just in generalized cultural trends but in specific actions of our own government (legislative, judicial, and executive), leaving the church marginalized and falsely labeled as “divisive and bigoted”; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Minnesota South (MNS) District in convention encourage its pastors, teachers and other called workers to be more intentional in sharing the counsel of Scripture with our congregational members as they relate to the social and public policy issues of the day, so that our lay members can, in turn, be more confident and effective in witnessing to the love of God and the truths of the Bible both to their neighbors in the course of everyday life and to the authorities that shape our public policy; and be it further

Resolved, That the MNS District president’s office provide the called workers with the appropriate background materials and training opportunities needed to speak knowledgeably to those areas of public policy where the church finds it necessary and appropriate to speak. These areas include the life issues, marriage and family issues, religious freedom issues, and matters related to parental choice in education; and be it further

Resolved, That the members of the MNS District (both congregations and called church workers) work cooperatively with other church bodies, organizations, and individuals who share our goals with respect to these matters of public policy, so that together we might share the love of Christ by contributing to the common temporal good, by fostering the spread of a biblical worldview within our common culture, and by removing any obstacles that might prevent the full and free proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ within the public square; and be it finally

Resolved, That the MNS District in convention memorialize the 2016 LCMS convention to encourage these and similar efforts in every district of the LCMS.

Minnesota South District

FLOOR COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OVERTURES ASSIGNMENTS

15. Reformation

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R11, R12, R14, R59

OVERTURES

15-01

To Encourage the Study of the Ninety-Five Theses and Augsburg Confession

WHEREAS, Martin Luther posted the Ninety-Five Theses on the church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517; and

WHEREAS, It was not his intent to create a new church but to stimulate debate about errors that had crept into the historic Christian Church in an effort to bring about reform; and

WHEREAS, On June 25, 1530, a defense of Luther's historic Christian teaching was presented to Emperor Charles V in the document that became known as the Augsburg Confession; and

WHEREAS, The Augsburg Confession made use of both Scripture and quotations from Church Fathers to show the historic teachings; and

WHEREAS, The Augsburg Confession also clearly stated which teachings were to be rejected as contrary to the Scriptures; and

WHEREAS, It has now become common in our age for people to say "Rome doesn't teach that anymore" or "We don't have to believe that now"; and

WHEREAS, Statements such as the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* have also misled people into thinking that the differences between Rome and the historic Christian Church are disappearing; and

WHEREAS, The Catholic Church has made its official teaching position clearly known through the publication of its Catechism of the Catholic Church [English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the United States of America, copyright © 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana]; and

WHEREAS, Among the erroneous teachings of Rome still being taught are the following, given as examples:

(a) The Assumption of Mary (on Nov. 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII declared that Mary "was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory" at the end of her earthly life);

(b) The infallibility of the Church (of Rome, of course) when the pope speaks about matters of faith and morals (officially adopted at the First Vatican Council, 1869–1870);

(c) The immaculate conception, which is not that Jesus was conceived without sin but that Mary was conceived without sin (decreed by Pope Pius IX in his 1854 decree *Ineffabilis Deus*);

(d) The practice of penance (the 1983 Code of Canon Law states that "a priest alone is the minister of the sacraments of penance," which is defined by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as "a whole consisting of three actions of the penitent and the priest's absolution," the three actions being "repentance, confession, or disclosure of sins to the priest, and the intention to make reparation and do works of reparation");

(e) The use of indulgences (the Catholic catechism goes on to state that "through indulgences the faithful can obtain remission of temporal punishment resulting from sin for themselves and also for the souls in Purgatory");

(f) Penance and indulgences depend on the existence of Purgatory, a place where people go after death to pay for their sins before going to heaven (Purgatory being defined at the First Council of Lyon in 1254); and

WHEREAS, These and other false teachings continue to deceive people and lead them astray from the truth that Christ died for our sins, paying for them in full, once for all (Heb. 7:26–27); and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures say that we should continue "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15); and

WHEREAS, They further say that we should "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season [when it is popular and when it is not]; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers suited to their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths (2 Tim. 4:2–4); and

WHEREAS, The issues addressed by the Augsburg Confession are as important today as they were then; therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod recognize the 500th anniversary of the Reformation by directing the preparation and publication of new studies of the Ninety-Five Theses and of the Augsburg Confession, studies designed to help the laity better understand the issues involved in those documents; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS continue to speak out unhesitatingly against any false teachings that threaten the unity of the Church, the Body of Christ; and be it finally

Resolved, That these efforts take place especially during the next decade as we celebrate the two significant anniversaries, first, of the Ninety-Five Theses and, second, of the Augsburg Confession.

Circuit 16

South Wisconsin District

15-02

To Endorse Preach the Word Project as Celebration of 500th Anniversary of Reformation

WHEREAS, October 31, 2017, marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, when Dr. Martin Luther posted on the door of the Castle Church the Ninety-Five Theses, his invitation to debate how one receives the blessings of Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Luther writes of preachers and proper preaching, "The first and only duty of the bishops, however, is to see that the people learn the gospel and the love of Christ. For on no occasion has Christ ordered that indulgences should be preached, but he forcefully commanded the gospel to be preached," (Luther's Works 48:47); and

WHEREAS, Dr. Luther writes, "The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God" (Luther's Works 31:31, Ninety-Five Theses), and St. Paul writes, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17), and, again, "I charge you ... preach the word," (2 Tim. 4:1, 2); and

WHEREAS, In honor of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and beneath the theme "It's *Still* All about Jesus," the President's Office has initiated the Preach the Word Project, which invites pastors to improve their craft of preaching the pure, sweet Gospel and the laity their hearing of it; and

WHEREAS, Both seminaries of our Synod endeavor to prepare men to preach the Word of Christ crucified and risen for the salvation of people to the fullest of each man's ability and with competent skills but also seek to engender an understanding that preaching is to involve lifelong development of those skills; and

WHEREAS, Our seminaries likewise energetically support the Synod's increasing emphasis on continuing education for all pastors; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention, as one way to honor the historic event of the Reformation, encourage pastors and congregations to participate in the Preach the Word Project; and be it further

Resolved, That in celebration and praise to Christ of His saving work for all sinners and for His use of Dr. Martin Luther and other faithful servants in reforming the Christian Church, largely through preaching, the convention assembly rise and sing the Doxology.

Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN; Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO; Minnesota South District

16. Family, Youth, and Young Adults

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R6, R11, R14, R59

OVERTURES

16-01

To Make Strengthening Lutheran Families a Mission Priority

WHEREAS, The foundation of every human society is the family as created and sustained by God (Gen. 1:26–28; 12:13; Matt. 19:1–9); and

WHEREAS, The family as created and sustained by God is under constant attack from the devil, the world, and the flesh, especially in our time and place; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther's emphasis and teaching on the household estate and the family vocations of husband and wife, father, mother, and child was a key insight of the Reformation; and

WHEREAS, The unmarried and widowed also constitute an essential and God-pleasing part of the family (1 Cor. 7:8); and

WHEREAS, Two demographic reports commissioned by the Stewardship Ministry of the Office of National Mission indicate that the rate of marriage, divorce, and child-bearing for the Missouri Synod closely reflects the culture around us rather than the patterns of God's Word; and

WHEREAS, These same reports indicate that the decline of the Lutheran family in terms of accepting God's gift of life with generosity is the most important causal factor in the Synod's significant decline in membership over the past four decades; and

WHEREAS, The Office of National Mission has begun a *Lutheran Family Initiative* among its various programmatic ministries to begin looking at ways to strengthen the Lutheran family; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS currently has six mission priorities, to wit,

1. Plant, sustain, and revitalize distinctly Lutheran churches.
2. Support and expand theological education.
3. Perform human care in close proximity to Word and Sacrament ministry.
4. Collaborate with the Synod's members and partners to enhance mission effectiveness.
5. Nurture pastors, missionaries, and professional church workers to promote spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being.
6. Enhance early childhood, elementary, and secondary education and youth ministry.

therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention amend the mission priorities to include "Strengthen and support the Lutheran family in

living out God's design"; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention commend the work of the Office of National Mission's *Lutheran Family Initiative*.

Board for National Mission

16-02

To Develop Resources for Christian Care and Teaching of Young Unmarried Fathers

WHEREAS, It is clear from Scripture that our heavenly Father wants men and women of childbearing age to marry and have children, as children have a special place in His heart; and

WHEREAS, Scripture tells us that the children's father is to be a spiritual leader in the household, leading them in prayer, teaching them in godly ways, and nurturing them as they grow; and

WHEREAS, It is clear in today's society that children are often born out of wedlock, contrary to God's plan and design for marriage, without the spiritual counseling that is usually provided for couples prior to their marriage; and

WHEREAS, Maintaining a family unit would be God pleasing; however, in many cases there is no intention on the part of the father to marry; and

WHEREAS, The young father has no knowledge of what is expected of a father, and many times becomes nonexistent at the time of the birth of his child; and

WHEREAS, There often exists care and teaching for the mother and her newborn child, allowing her to properly attend to the child's well-being; and

WHEREAS, There are not always readily available means of Christian care and teaching for the father to learn about his responsibility, obligation, maintaining a family unit, and the needs of the family that he had a part in starting; therefore be it

Resolved, That the LCMS develop and foster resources that are designed for the purpose of Christian care and teaching of young unmarried fathers.

Brainerd Circuit
Minnesota North District

16-03

To Encourage Member Congregations and Families to Pursue Affiliations with Alternative Scout-Like Organizations

WHEREAS, At its national annual meeting in May 2013, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) announced a policy change admitting homosexual youth to scout programs effective January 1, 2014, but also reaffirmed its long-standing policy of not allowing openly homosexual adults to serve as scoutmasters or leaders in any capacity; and

WHEREAS, The BSA National Executive Board on July 10, 2015, lifted the BSA's ban on openly gay scout leaders, resulting in a dissolution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the BSA and the cessation of an official LCMS relationship with the BSA; and

WHEREAS, The national organization of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) has long permitted adults of any sexual orientation to serve as leaders and allows both its local councils and local units to affiliate with and utilize the materials of Planned Parenthood, an organization that is responsible for the majority of abortions in the USA and that promotes unchristian sexual activities among girls; and

WHEREAS, American Heritage Girls and Trail Life USA were organized, respectively, in 1995 and 2013 as distinctively Christian scouting organizations for girls and boys; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS in May 2014 signed an MoU with American Heritage Girls, which stipulates that “there is no American Heritage Girls authority which supersedes the authority of the local pastor and the congregation in any phase of the program affecting the spiritual welfare of those who participate”; and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has been negotiating a similar MoU with Trail Life USA; and

WHEREAS, Members of the LCMS do not wish to voluntarily expose our youth to the societal dangers and immoral behavior of the homosexual lifestyle and the abortion industry; and

WHEREAS, Many congregations of the LCMS desire to continue providing scout-like organizations for both boys and girls; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention discourage families and strongly discourage congregations from being involved in BSA and GSUSA; and be it further

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention encourage the Synod’s member congregations and families to pursue affiliations with alternative scout-like organizations (if sole authority for the spiritual welfare of member youth is delegated to the local congregation and pastors).

Circuit 5

South Wisconsin District

16-04

To Celebrate Ministry of Rev. Dr. Terry K. Dittmer

WHEREAS, The Master commends, “Well done, good and faithful servant” to those who have sought to use His gracious gifts; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Terry K. Dittmer was brought to the waters of Holy Baptism on September 5, 1948, and ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry on June 23, 1974 ; and

WHEREAS, The Rev. Dittmer has faithfully and capably served the Lord and LCMS Youth Ministry for 37 years, with the past 15 years of service as Director of Youth Ministry for the LCMS, and will retire from ministry following the 2016 National Youth Gathering; and

WHEREAS, The Rev. Dittmer has strengthened the faith of many and brought into the fellowship of our Lord an unknown number through his Christ-centered commitment to the young people of the LCMS; therefore be it

Resolved, That the 2016 LCMS convention join in thanks and praise to God for Rev. Dittmer and his years of faithful service and outstanding work for the LCMS; and be it further

Resolved, That the LCMS extend its sincere appreciation to Rev. Dittmer and pray God’s richest blessings on him as the Lord guides his walk of faith in his retirement.

Board for National Mission
St. Louis, MO

17. Preaching and Church Worker Continuing Education

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R64

OVERTURES

17-01

To Encourage Continuing Pastoral Education

WHEREAS, The parish pastor is the shepherd of the flock entrusted with the spiritual welfare of God’s people; and

WHEREAS, The cultural climate continues to move more distant from the Word of God; and

WHEREAS, Pastors are lifelong learners; and

WHEREAS, The faith of all Christians must be strengthened by continuing study of the Word; and

WHEREAS, The pastor requires continuing care and strengthening of body, mind, and soul; and

WHEREAS, The Synod is blessed by the ministry of such entities as Grace Place, Pastoral Leadership Institute, Doxology, Shepherd’s Canyon, and many others; therefore be it

Resolved, That pastors be encouraged by congregation and district to be engaged in continuing education; and be it further

Resolved, That congregations be encouraged to remove obstacles and provide resources of time and finance for their pastors’ continuing education; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod, with the assistance of our seminaries and universities, develop a program to provide pastors with continuing education.

South Wisconsin District

18. Worker Wellness

REPORTS

R1, R1.1, R1.2, R13

OVERTURES

18-01

To Encourage Development of Retirement Assistance Program for Parish Pastors

WHEREAS, An increasing percentage of LCMS pastors are over 55 years old; and

WHEREAS, An increasing percentage of South Wisconsin District pastors are over 55 years old; and

WHEREAS, The transition into retirement for a pastor and his wife can be challenging; and

WHEREAS, The PALS (Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support) program provides assistance to pastors and wives entering pastoral ministry; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod explore the creation of a program to assist pastors and their wives as they transition into retirement.

South Wisconsin District

To Encourage Concordia Plan Services to Provide Paid Maternity Leave to Workers Enrolled in Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan Who Are New Adoptive Mothers

WHEREAS, God is the creator of the unborn and the keeper of those born into this world, including orphans (Job 10:11; Ps. 139:13–16; Is. 44:2; Psalm 121; Deut. 10:18; Hos. 14:3; et al.); and

WHEREAS, God's people are urged to extend His care by guarding the life of the unborn and by caring for the widow and the fatherless (Is. 1:17; James 1:27; et al.); and

WHEREAS, Many members of the congregations in our district, including some church workers and other employees of congregations, are among those who show such care by adopting children; and

WHEREAS, The disability-income benefit through Concordia Plan Service's Disability and Survivor Plan (CDSP) provides for a paid maternity leave for enrollees who are new biological mothers, but not for new adoptive mothers; and

WHEREAS, Adoptive parents share many of the same concerns for their children that biological parents have, including attachment (adopted children are taken away from everything they have ever known and placed into a home of unknowns; the children need to attach to their new caregivers and build trust) and a financial burden (adoptions are an expensive undertaking); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is a strongly pro-life church body and its health insurance and retirement plan vendor, Concordia Plan Services, has demonstrated that it, too, is strongly pro-life in its policies; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod's pro-life stance is demonstrated in many ways, including by urging adoption as a life-saving alternative to abortion and as a God-pleasing way to care for orphans; therefore be it

Resolved, That the South Dakota District, through the office of the district president, strongly encourage Concordia Plan Services to include a disability-income benefit for new adoptive mothers enrolled in the Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan as it already does for enrollees who are new biological mothers, or provide for a paid maternity leave for the enrolled adoptive mothers in some way other than the disability-income benefit; and be it further

Resolved, That such a paid maternity leave benefit for new adoptive mothers enrolled in the Concordia Disability and Survivor Plan be commensurate to the paid disability for a natural delivery without extenuating circumstances, beginning the day the adopted child is brought into the home of the adoptive parents; and be it finally

Resolved, That the South Dakota District convention submit this resolution to the 2016 LCMS convention for action.

South Dakota District

To Encourage Annual Review of Reported Salary Information

WHEREAS, Errors can and have occurred on the Annual Compensation of Participating Workers form submitted yearly by employers to Concordia Plan Services (CPS), which can result in reduced retirement benefits for workers; and

WHEREAS, CPS has made available to all enrolled workers a user portal at mycps.org which allows workers to review their salary histories as recorded by CPS based on the Annual Compensation of Participating Workers form; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Michigan District encourage enrolled workers to review annually their reported compensation through the mycps.org website and investigate any discrepancies; and be it further

Resolved, That CPS give consideration to having church workers countersign the same, attesting that they have read both the directions and the report as it is to be filed.

Michigan District

To Thank Rev. Dr. Carl Krueger and Dianne Krueger for Distinguished Service

WHEREAS, In special recognition of distinguished service to the SELC District and the LCMS and to the Church at large; and

WHEREAS, President Krueger earned his MDiv degree and was ordained in 1974; and

WHEREAS, President Krueger served the United States of America by serving as a chaplain in the Air National Guard achieving the rank of Lt. Col.; and

WHEREAS, President Krueger and his wife, Dianne, serve as a model of the Christian faith for their five children and seven grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Both President and Dianne have served as an exemplary district president and chief administrative assistant for 18 years; and

WHEREAS, Both President and Dianne have been loving, supporting, encouraging, and humble servants making numerous sacrifices and faithful in their proclamation of the Gospel; therefore be it

Resolved, By the members of the SELC District that it approves appointment of Rev. Dr. Carl Krueger as district president emeritus; and be it further

Resolved, That the members of the SELC District herein extends its deepest appreciation to President and Mrs. Krueger for their dedication and service to the Lord and His Church, including the roles of father, mother, husband, wife, pastor, homemaker, district president, chaplain, and friends in Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That President Krueger's height be recorded as six foot, five inches in all future publications; and be it finally

Resolved, That this resolution be spread upon the permanent minutes of this convention and that the LCMS also recognize and thank the Kruegers for their incredible example, love, and service in the name of our Lord.

SELC 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:

Raymond L. Hartwig, 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 2016 *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: _____