

CHRIST IS RISEN

..... I N D E E D

Monday, July 20

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Today’s Business

Issue 3

Morning Session

- 8:00 Matins—*Rev. Christopher S. Esget*
- 8:25 Registration, Credentials, and Elections (#11)
- 8:30 Consent Calendar
- 8:40 Greetings—LCEF, *Rev. J. Bart Day*
- 8:55 Pastoral Ministry and Seminaries (#6)
- 10:00 Registration, Credentials, and Elections (#11)
(Balloting for Secretary and Synod Board of Directors)
- 10:40 Special Recognition—LCMS President Emeritus,
Rev. Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick
- 10:45 Convention Essay—*Rev. Dr. Thomas J. Egger,*
“Christ Changes Everything”
- 11:10 Essay Responder—*Rev. C. Bryan Wolfmueller*
- 11:20 Life Together (#4)
- 12:00 Recess

Afternoon Session

- 1:30 Midday Prayer—*Rev. Dr. Terrence C. Chan*
- 1:45 Minutes
- 1:50 Committee for Convention Nominations (*other boards, CTCR,*
boards of regents, and synodwide entities)
- 2:30 Presentation—International Missions: *Planting Churches*
- 2:50 International Witness (#2)
- 3:20 Greetings—The LCMS Foundation, *David Fiedler*
- 3:25 Greetings—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church,
Rev. Mark G. Schroeder
- 3:35 Structure and Administration (#9)
- 4:45 Presentation—National Missions: *Church Planting*
- 5:15 National Witness (#1)
- 5:45 Vespers
- 6:00 Recess
- 8:00 *Erin Bode Concert (Sheraton Phoenix, Ballroom ABC)*

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THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod
The 69th Regular Convention
Phoenix, AZ — July 18–23, 2026

DAILY WORSHIP AND ESSAYS

Essayist – “Christ Changes Everything”



The Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger serves as president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He joined the seminary faculty in 2005, teaching mainly in the area of Old Testament. A native of Muscatine, Iowa, he served as pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in rural Storm Lake, Iowa, from 2000–2005. His areas of interest include biblical Hebrew, the books of Genesis and Exodus, Christ typology, narrative and rhetorical analysis, and the nature and authority of Scripture. He has also made contributions in the area of American Lutheran history, especially the history of the LCMS and its first president, Dr. C.F.W. Walther. He served on the LCMS Small Catechism Explanation Revision Committee (2015–2017), the Board of Directors for Providence Classical Christian Academy in St. Louis (2008–2019), and the Board of Regents for Concordia University Chicago (2019–2021). He has served on the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations since 2010. Tom and his wife Tori have six children and seven grandchildren.

Essay Responder



The Rev. Bryan Wolfmueller is pastor of St. Paul and Jesus Deaf Lutheran Churches in Austin, TX. He is the author of numerous books, including “Finally Free” (CPH, 2025) and “Has American Christianity Failed?” (CPH, 2016). He is host of the “Theology Q&A Podcast,” the “Worldwide Bible Class,” and posts videos on YouTube at [wolfmueller1](https://www.youtube.com/user/wolfmueller1). Wolfmueller and his wife, Keri host annual international theological adventure tours, and have a number of other theological projects that all end up on the website www.wolfmueller.co. Wolfmueller is a member of the DOXOLOGY Collegium. He and Keri (proud parents and grandparents!) live in Round Rock, Texas.

Preacher – Matins



The Rev. Christopher S. Esget is fifth vice-president and a member of the Praesidium of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). He has served as a Synod vice-president since 2015 and represents the church’s East-Southeast Region. Esget is the senior pastor of Immanuel Evangelical—Lutheran Church in Alexandria, Va., and superintendent of Immanuel Lutheran School, where he has served since 2001. Prior to being called to Immanuel, Esget served as pastor of Bethel Lutheran Church, DuQuoin, Ill., where he was ordained in 1998. He attended Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., where he earned a Master of Divinity in 1997 and a Master of Sacred Theology in 2005. He is the chairman of the Synod’s Created Male and Female Task Force. Esget is the author of *(Dis)Ordered: Lies about Human Nature and the Truth that Sets Us Free* (Concordia Publishing House, 2023). He is a contributing author to several other books, and has also been published in *The Lutheran Witness*, *Concordia Pulpit Resources*, *The Good Shepherd Institute*, *For the Life of the World*, *Higher Things*, and *Gottesdienst*. Born and raised near Minneapolis, Esget pursued his love of music with classical piano and trombone studies at the University of Minnesota before graduating *summa cum laude* with a bachelor’s degree in music from the Berklee College of Music in Boston in 1993. Esget lives in Alexandria, Va., with his wife and son.

Preacher – Midday Prayer



The Rev. Dr. Terrence Chan serves as pastor and lead missionary at Christ for All Nations Lutheran Church in San Francisco, a multiethnic parish encompassing multiple congregations, languages, locations, and ministries. Chan is the founder of the Multi-Asian Inter-ethnic Network (MAIN) which sponsors the national Multi Asian Gathering (MAG), held annually in conjunction with the multi-ethnic symposium at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as well as regional MAGs nationwide. Born in Hong Kong and raised in a family that has lived in the United States since 1869, Dr. Chan is both a fifth-generation American and a first-generation Asian immigrant. His ministry passion focuses on developing multicultural leaders, strengthening multiethnic ministries, and equipping congregations to engage communities beyond their own.

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The recessional following the opening Divine Service at the 69th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in Phoenix on Saturday, July 18, 2026. LCMS Communications/Erik M. Lunsford

PRESIDENT'S REPORT, PART 3

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Phoenix, Arizona • July 19, 2026

Matthew C. Harrison, President

The theme verse for this 69th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) is “Christ Is Risen Indeed,” based on 1 Corinthians 15:20–22: “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”

On the Second Sunday of Easter, April 13, 1528, Luther preached: “*This preaching and making known the resurrection of Christ is [God’s] great work of love. Where it is set forth, one must receive it in no other way than in the heart. Because the resurrection of Christ is given to me, I can’t put it in my pocket. It can’t be placed anywhere else than in my heart. This very weighty doctrine rules in the heart*” (WA 27.121.10f., trans. Matthew C. Harrison).

This greatest “work of love” is yours! It is ours! *He was put to death for our transgressions and raised for our justification* (Rom. 4:25). God has put that in your pocket, that is, in your heart. Because of that fact,

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Welcome!

Did you hear that the guy who invented the heat index just died last week here in Phoenix? He was only 80, but he felt like 110.

Welcome! We’re here because the Synod Board of Directors wanted to save a million dollars or two. They are penny pinchers and thank God for that! How many of you are first-time delegates? Welcome. It’s going to be quite a week for all of us.

You are the governing body of the LCMS. You represent the whole church. You will determine how we move forward in the face of many, many issues, challenges and opportunities. My main job this week in chairing this event is to allow this body to process business. We will have our Acts 19:32 moments: “*Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together.*”

I will not go down in history as a great parliamentarian. That’s OK. Frankly, I don’t care. I can, however, move business along. I’ve got a great parliamentarian right next to me for help. Some will want to slow down the convention. Some, at times, will want to speed up the convention. The first couple of days will proceed kindly and cautiously, but there will be a point when the body shifts into second gear to get business done. I will get to that point sooner than you, and, being Minnesota nice, you will slow me down, but then we’ll all shift at some point and settle in to a groove. We always want to hear everybody out, though as best we can.

To be sure, I have my opinions just like you do. Sometimes I have strong opinions. And I will share some of those momentarily. During debate, however, I may feel compelled on a certain significant issue to give up the chair and speak from the floor. Otherwise, my job from this chair is to facilitate debate, see that the rules are followed, and make sure folks have a reasonable opportunity to speak as the rules allow. I will not, from the chair, give up our collective, constitutionally defined bias against anything contrary to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. And it may even happen that I rule a motion out of order on those grounds.

We will sin against each other this week. We will become impatient. We will take offense. And we’ll forgive. We will all see the Synod, warts and all. Despite all that, and all the nonsense that leads up to these events, I’m of the unwavering, determined conviction that the LCMS is simply the best thing going. And at the end of the week, we will thank God for His wonderful blessings.

An Unexpected Resurrection Blessing in Spite of Calamity

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Did you know that Christians worshiped at Golgotha, and at the Tomb of the Resurrection right next to it, up to and through the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and on through 117 A.D., until something dastardly was done by Roman Emperor Hadrian? He rebuilt the ruined city of Jerusalem, and he decided for good measure to desecrate the sacred Christian sites. He did this at Bethlehem, too.

Hadrian constructed a large platform. On the platform on the site of the Crucifixion and just yards away, above the tomb where Jesus rose, he constructed two temples. Directly over the tomb he built a temple to Jupiter, and above Golgotha he placed a temple

and statue of Venus. Both statues were precisely placed upon the sacred sites. Those pagan idols stood for 180 years! But you know what? It worked for good! God was working crosses for good right where the cross stood!

When Constantine came to faith, he sent his mother, Helena, to find the sacred places. She contracted Macarius, bishop of Jerusalem, to tear down the temples and the platform and find the most sacred sites in the history of Christianity. It was the first Christian archeological dig. Under the statue of Venus, they found the rock of Golgotha; under Jupiter, the tomb. The very tomb of Jesus. (See Joel Kramer, *Where God Came Down*, Brigham City, Utah: SourceFlix | Expedition Bible, 2020, p. 110.) The devil desecrated and meant to hide the place where death was defeated. But in a twist of divinely wrought fate, he only marked it for the ages. Archeologists since the 1960s have definitively demonstrated that Golgotha was a quarry by a garden, which became a cemetery, all before Jesus' crucifixion. Now, to be sure, we'd believe the Bible without this evidence! But how nice to have it! Hadrian marked the very spots of Golgotha where Jesus died. The very spots and the spot of the tomb.

Luther preached: **"Christ distributes the resurrection through Word and Sacraments of baptism and the altar"** (WA 27.119.17, trans. Harrison). The place is real. It's exactly as John's Gospel describes it. Golgotha is real. The garden is real. The tomb is real. The resurrection is real. It was covered by idols for 180 years. And what happened there is delivered to us today. What the resurrection distributes is real.

A Half Century of Decline: Is There Any Good News?

My friends, the LCMS is 179 years old. My favorite passage of the *Book of Concord* is Article 11: *"God determines in advance those specific afflictions by which he conforms us to his Son. Therefore, as the Apostle says, 'All things work together for good for those called according to His purpose.'"* I'm not blaming God for our decline. The birthrate is the issue. But I am saying he works all things for good.

The LCMS enjoyed 150 years of growth, and now it has experienced 50 years of decline. No Synod president, no program, no district president (no matter how missional), no board of directors, no band of pastors (no matter how zealous) has been able to turn that trend. I, in fact, raised the issue over a decade ago by commissioning the first significant studies in decades on the cause of our decline. We know what's happening. The huge "Boomer" classes, none larger than my baptismal class in 1962, were followed by a nationwide downturn in the birth rate, a downturn that is also happening globally. More education and more job opportunities for women contributed to families delaying children and having fewer children. The numerical performance of each LCMS district tracks remarkably with the birth rate of its state. Nebraska and South Dakota are the highest, New Jersey the lowest. Today the U.S. birth rate is lower than ever. Both track with the birthrates in their states. To be sure there are numerous other issues.

But there is good news. The LCMS has one of the highest rates of adult conversions — 30% — of all denominations. Last I checked, this is much higher than that of Catholics. If you came into the LCMS as an adult, please stand.

We also know that the LCMS has a larger core of young families producing children than other mainline denominations. We know that our adult retention rates are much higher than that of evangelicals. We know that young men and families are showing up in our congregations in increasing numbers, as reported to me across the nation. We will also likely continue to decline until the Boomers pass. But thousands are still being baptized and are converting and will continue to do so. We'll talk about the many challenges and opportunities we face as a result. Make no mistake: Though it is often hidden under crosses and disappointments, we know that, as the apostle says, "for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Main Goals

One of my two main goals in 16 years has been that we retain our clear confession and practice and not ditch the order of the service, closed communion, or clear Lutheran practice and Law/Gospel preaching to act like evangelicals, complete with women preaching. This is not about so-called contemporary worship. Keep Confession and Absolution, keep the psalm Introit, keep the lectionary, keep Lutheran Gospel-centered preaching, keep the creeds, don't mess with the Lord's words in the Supper. Keep Gospel, Christ-centered hymnody and song done well. Do so, and you won't be hassled by me or the Synod about instrumentation. The young people seeking us out and finding us want authenticity, reality, Sacraments, tradition and, above all, Gospel-saturated preaching of the free forgiveness of sins in Jesus! They seek the kind of church the Augsburg Confession says we are!

My second main goal has been urging and training for witness and outreach (national and international). Thus, *Every One His Witness*, *re: Vitality*, and now our church planting effort are building. In fact, we are on track to receive a huge grant precisely to accelerate church planting already happening, working with districts and congregations. Our Office of International Mission's strategic tag line, "Spread the Gospel, plant Lutheran churches and show mercy," was chosen for a reason. It's biblical. Our work is on fire in Latin America, it has caught fire in Europe and Eurasia, and we now have 20 FOROs focusing on different international efforts. And we are just getting started.

I Corinthians 15:58

Our convention theme Scripture (1 Cor. 15:20–22) states, “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead” and He’s the “firstfruits,” which means there is more coming, including us. A few verses later Paul gives us a “therefore”:

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

“My beloved brothers and sisters.” That is you! You are loved. Love should reign among us. No rancor or public squabbling, or every guy with two cans of Schlitz and an internet connection spouting uncharitable, unconscionable, unloving, anonymous rancor, invective and nonsense! Why do we stand for this as a Synod? Repent! For the kingdom of God is at hand!

“Be steadfast!” This is the same word used in I Timothy 3:15. The church is the “pillar and buttress” (the foundation) of the truth. The Latin used the word “firm.” *“Firmamentum Veritatis.”* Firm! Truth!

“Immovable.” The immovable rock is Christ. But there’s no lack of movement!

“Always abounding in the work of the LORD.” Abounding! Abounding in knowledge of the Bible. Abounding in preaching. Abounding in witness. Abounding in proclaiming the abundant forgiveness of Jesus. Abounding in love. Abounding in your sacred vocations of father, mother, son, daughter, worker, neighbor, evangelist!

Abounding in the WORK of the LORD! Not squabbling. Not attacking. Not pontificating. Abounding in Witness, Mercy and Life Together! Abounding in forgiveness. Abounding in love.

“Your labor is not in vain.” In I Corinthians 15:10, Paul has words for us all: *“But by the grace of God I am what I am [sins and all], and His grace toward me was not in vain [not for nothin’!]. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.”*

Good Things

Adult confirmations are running back up to pre-COVID numbers, for the past four years.

The Million Dollar Life Match has energized congregations, life ministries and Recognized Service Organizations. We asked for reports on lives touched, and the numbers are astounding — some 670,000 women and children in crisis assisted! And Jesus shared with all of them.

Sixteen years ago, we were in financial crisis — some \$40,000,000 borrowed against funds designated for other things and another \$25,000,000-plus or minus owed on the debt assumed from the universities. That’s \$65,000,000 in the red! Today, not long after the LCMS Board of Directors (BOD) set a 10-year goal of having one year of operations cash on hand, we are nearing the goal. That alone is a \$115,000,000 swing to the good and that hasn’t been from selling properties. We have no debt. We are not responsible for the debt of other entities. Kudos to the Synod BOD, to BOD chairman Christian Preus, and especially to our diligent, Gospel-loving, hardworking, hard charging, International Center (IC) staff.

Per last convention’s directive, we’ve been hard at work with our sister churches and others. Several have left or are leaving the heterodox Lutheran World Federation. Our yearly Church Relations conferences focusing on strong doctrinal and practical topics like church planting have created a culture of strong commitment to Scripture and the Confessions. We are unquestionably the leading force for global *Book of Concord* Lutheranism. We love our friends around the globe, and they love us. And you’ll meet many of them here. Ask them.

Set Apart to Serve has been adopted by all 35 LCMS districts. Our seminaries are financially and theologically strong and getting stronger. This fall our seminaries will enjoy the largest total enrollment in a decade. At our universities we now have more church work students than in 2019, despite school closures and the unlawful removal of Concordia University Texas.

Our universities are united, committed to our Synod’s confession and cooperating with the church and each other. It’s beautiful to behold.

100 church plants in process.

527 All Nations groups.

Concordia Publishing House is thriving.

The Lutheran Women’s Missionary League continues to provide record amounts for the work of the Offices of National and International Mission.

Hard Things

We grieve the downsizing of Concordia University Ann Arbor. It's been a grueling and frustrating situation for all of us, including me. Bottom line, two parties disagreed on how to solve the challenge. The one side believed that the yearly multi-million-dollar losses for over a decade would eventually be offset by the growth of programs at the North Campus.

The other side believed that the deficit spending was jeopardizing also the Concordia University Wisconsin campus, and that the closure of the South Campus and its programs were what was needed to attain financial stability. The CUWAA Board of Regents alone had authority to make that decision and did so. I wish it were different. Meanwhile, Michigan District leadership has expressed its strong desire to me to be involved in the North Campus, and the Synod BOD has expressly urged CUWAA Regents to re-start church work programs as soon as possible. Lord, have mercy upon us all.

There is real tension between our residential seminaries and some who desire a fully online Master of Divinity. I think the evidence is clear that this would severely hurt our seminaries, probably cause one to close and significantly reduce residential programs. The founding of one and use of two unauthorized online seminaries has also caused great tension. The resolutions will be before you for careful debate and consideration.

The Specific Ministry Pastor program is salutary, especially for urban, rural, remote and other challenging circumstances where it is extremely hard to get a pastor, like Alaska. And this is nothing against your SMP guy. We love him too. I've met most all of them over the years (especially the St. Louis men, who all come to the IC at the beginning and end of their program). I appreciate their zeal and desire to serve and their faithful service. We need them.

However, there are issues of concern. The SMP program only provides about one-third of the seminary course work of a residential student. We will not retain a strong and sufficiently educated ministerium if we continue to increase the percentage of SMP grads. Thankfully, many of these men later go on to become general pastors through the General Pastoral Colloquy program. Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL), reports that by 2050, at the current rate, 48% of all its graduates serving the Synod will be SMP. CSL also reports that more than 70% of SMP applicants this fall are divorced and remarried. That's not students admitted, but these are challenges. We must exercise wisdom. I have clearly stated to the Council of Presidents (COP) that I will not vote in favor of men being placed in congregations to learn how to be pastors where closed communion is not practiced and/or the order of the service has been dispensed with.

The resolution prompted by the horrible and ideologically/politically charged Charlie Kirk assassination is controversial. The floor committee has continued to seek input, and we will do our best to hear voices from the floor and come to a unifying and God-pleasing outcome. No matter what we do, I for one wrote at the time that I appreciated his apologetics on trans issues, for instance, and his Christian confession. He was also a political apologist. God help us find the right path and to be loving

Forgiveness and charity are needed on all these issues.

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong doing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor. 13:4–7).

Anniversaries and the Road Ahead

We have several anniversaries to celebrate.

2026 is the 130th anniversary of Deaf Ministry in the LCMS.

2027 is the 150th anniversary of Black Ministry in the LCMS.

2027 is the 450th anniversary of the Formula of Concord. The Epitome, or short version, should be studied by all our congregations. Article II on “free will” is superbly contemporary.

2029 is the 500th anniversary of the Small Catechism. We expect the Small Catechism to be in rigorous use in all congregations and all homes, and we should state as much, and each congregation's constitution should require it.

2030 is the 500th anniversary of our blessed Augsburg Confession. The doctrinal articles should be in our next hymnal and familiar to every informed adult. We need Small Catechism tools and resources developed by all appropriate entities in Synod. To “Tell the Next Generation,” we must go forward by returning to the catechism basics.

Consent Calendar

We've added a consent calendar. Daily I will place a vote before you. The resolutions that have been chosen to be in it are those I believe most everyone will want to adopt without discussion. Unless at least 10% of the body votes to take a resolution off the consent calendar, everything in it will be adopted by unanimous consent. Why? So we can take more time on more weighty

matters. The resolutions proposed for the calendar have been vetted by the COP and no one has raised any issues with any of them and we will continue to vet them through the week before we place them on the calendar.

Speaking of Weighty Matters

I've requested that Floor Committee 9 prepare for debate a resolution to return the presidential vote to the convention. I have no dog in this fight, since I will not stand again. Why? Not why I won't stand again. 1. The technical challenges involved in the current process of voting which I believe were handled magnificently by the Secretary's Office, but it's just part of the beast. 2. Only 58.64% of all eligible voters registered. 3. The current process sends all and sundry out hunting for registered voters who failed to vote on previous ballots, politicizing the process. 4. The often-shameful online activity and vitriol displayed for weeks on end to the world. This is not a good look. 5. The grueling process for the candidates. 6. At convention the voting will take minutes, with all congregations represented, and all eligible voters present and accounted for right then and there.

Our Sacred Gift and Task: Is the Augsburg Confession Still Relevant?

My dear friends, Pope Leo gave his first *Urbi et Orbi* speech in Rome after his consecration as pope. In it he proclaimed a plenary indulgence. Yes, indulgence. Rome has continued to completely endorse prayers for the dead, masses for the dead and indulgences, all to shorten time in "purgatory" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Ignatius Press, 1994, p. 371, 366, *et passim*). We love our Roman Catholic friends and family and thank God many know and trust Jesus for salvation in spite of this mythical nonsense. Without Rome, the life movement would be D.O.A. Without the Roman Catholics on the Supreme Court, religious freedom would be sunk in the sexuality issues. In the last year or two of his pontificate, Pope Francis sent the arm of St. Jude (in a silver, hand-shaped monstrance, in the form of giving a blessing) to 100 cities in the U.S. All who met the qualifications received an indulgence for venerating it, shortening their time in purgatory. It's like the Reformation never happened.

The Augsburg Confession is needed now more than ever. "*Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight*" (Rom. 3 and 4).

This, my friends, is our sacred gift, and our sacred task before the whole world, now more than ever. That's why I have included the clear Gospel of Christ's cross and resurrection for forgiveness in every sermon, every document, and every statement for 16 years.

A Word of Thanks

I wish to express my thanks and love for all the members of our Council of Presidents. I feel more support and love from all of them than ever before in this long tenure. They deal unendingly with the most difficult tasks in the church. Every problem comes by their desks, some nearly unsolvable, many with long tails into the past. In this technological age, people expect issues of ecclesiastical supervision to be resolved much more quickly than ever before. The district presidents and I are not at liberty, according to our constitution and bylaws, to provide details, and most often we are aware of much more than what is publicly (and very often inaccurately) shared. We are not perfect. I love them all and support them. And they love and honorably support me. And we agree completely on almost all situations, as they work toward resolution. We owe the Council of Presidents all a deep debt of gratitude.

Finally, as in the past, I have commended and made a plea to this body regarding the vice-presidents. First Vice-President **Rev. Peter Lange** is an amazing human being. He is faithful to a fault, and the most organized and resilient man I've ever known. He is invaluable to me, to the COP and the Synod. The work he does for you is unheralded and mostly unknown but profound.

Second Vice-President **Rev. Ben Ball** is an amazing parish pastor who always brings that perspective to issues. His vibrant rural parish and school provide a context for his ministry that makes him a vital participant in the matters we often deal with. I treasure his insight on what motivates young pastors. It's been fun to watch him grow in his position. His ready smile and good humor are a joy.

Third Vice-President **Rev. Dr. Scott Murray** is retiring after long service to the Synod. Pastor of a large Houston congregation of many ethnicities, he's a scholar's scholar and has been an unflappable source of wisdom and the dearest of friends.

Fourth Vice-President **Rev. Dr. Nabil Nour** is one of a kind, born in Nazareth (Jesus' hometown) and for decades one of the most diligent preachers and pastoral visitors I know, ever sharing Christ with anyone who finds him or herself within the length of a football field. He's been an example of joy and kindness. His spoken fluency in Hebrew is a gift to us all! His prayers for me are unceasing.

Fifth Vice-President **Rev. Christopher Esget** is a consummate parish pastor at a burgeoning church. He is a scholar, and his longstanding connections in Washington, D.C., with congressional leaders and staff, even Supreme Court justices and much more, make him invaluable.

The Rev. Dr. Eric Skovgaard replaced Sixth Vice-President Rev. Dr. John Wohlrabe when the latter moved to Florida. Eric was first vice-president and then president of the South Wisconsin District after John Wille's untimely death, which gave him invaluable experience. He serves a large parish in Milwaukee. His kind and steady pastoral approach is evident in all he does and says, and he's humble to a fault.

The decision is yours. I would deeply appreciate serving my final term with these brothers, even as we bid goodbye to Dr. Murray.

One more matter, I wish to thank my dear wife, Kathy. Yesterday was our 45th wedding anniversary.

And I make this last line to the convention, but I guess I'll make it to my wife as well.

Thank you all for the honor of serving you.

God bless you all.

Thank you.

OPENING DIVINE SERVICE SERMON

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Phoenix, Arizona • July 19, 2026

Matthew C. Harrison, President

Christ is risen indeed. Hallelujah.

Those idiots. You've got to be kidding me. No ecclesiastical supervision. Why is it taking forever? Why haven't we heard anything? He's not doing anything. He's too heavy handed. They're arguing about what? Who sent what out? He said what? Another faction? Now what are they arguing about? Who's the ringleader? That blowhard. He's gotta go. Sounds like false doctrine. Secret meetings. What in the world is going on?

We can well imagine all the nonsense swirling around the Corinthian congregation.

We barely have to imagine Paul's reaction when he got word, probably from Sosthenes, who'd been the synagogue leader in Corinth and converted to Christianity. Paul founded the Corinthian church in A.D. 52, when he says in our text that he worked harder than all the other apostles. It sounds kind of arrogant, but given the context, I think it really is not so arrogant. Paul wrote the letter in spring of 56 from Ephesus, during the Easter season and just before Pentecost, after nearly losing his neck to the silversmiths and company.

First Corinthians 15 is an Easter sermon, my friends. His nearly two-year stay in Ephesus was quite successful. But that's what got him in trouble with the mob. He was threatening pagan business income. You want to get people excited? Combine religion and money and take the money away.

Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.

Paul was attacked by his fellow Jews and the pagans. Remember, it was the Ephesian Jews who not long after ratted him out, lied about him when he was in the temple at Jerusalem, which led to his captivity and his death.

"Those idiots, you've got to be kidding me!" He had the same reaction to the Galatians denying the Gospel just a year before. "Who has bewitched you?" Paul wrote.

He had written the Corinthians a hard letter already prior to 1 Corinthians. Problems, problems, problems, problems. You'd think being founded by St. Paul himself would lead a church from going off the rails. Not so. The Galatians were mixing faith and works, denying the Gospel. He had all kinds of problems at Corinth, and to top it off, they were denying the very resurrection of the body on the Last Day. And all that in the context of a mob seeking his life in Ephesus.

But these hardships are but a snippet of Paul's trials, which culminate in martyrdom at a military barracks — I've been there — at the end of the Appian Way, just outside the southern wall of Rome.

My friends consider this: Oh, would Paul have loved to have our problems.

And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Paul lays it down in this verse: "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Cor. 15:12).

Christ's resurrection is ours. Ours is Christ's. "Deny either, and you deny both," says Luther. He means that Christ is our head. If we were not going to rise from the dead, it would follow that Christ also had not risen from the dead. Head and body go

together. Can't have a living head and a dead body. Can't have a dead body and a living head. No resurrection of Christ, and death reigns.

Right before verse 12, Paul says, "We preach, and thus you believed." Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ. What is such preaching, my friends? Here is Paul's *sine qua non* for Christian preaching. Here's what he means by "we preach Christ, the crucified one."

Just at the beginning of Chapter 15: "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel which I gospelled to you" — literally, "the good news which I good news-ed to you" — "which you have received by faith." "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

It's by faith, a gift in which you stand, you are in the state of grace. Nothing is worse than being dead in trespasses and sins, but you have been raised to life to stand. You stand baptized into His death and resurrection. You stand forgiven. You stand redeemed, bought back. You are justified in God's sight. You stand sanctified. You are holy in Christ. He delivered you. Now stand. Now confess. Now deliver Christ to others and act like Christians. And "by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you — unless you believed in vain" (1 Cor. 15:2).

You have not believed in vain. You have once believed, and you continue to believe in Christ. I tell you, Christ was put to death for your transgressions and raised for your justification. "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28). No one will snatch you out of Christ's hand.

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received" (1 Cor. 15:3). Here's the most important stuff. If you're not hearing this from your pastor, grab him by the neck and tell him, "I need this stuff of first importance. Life is hard, illness stinks, losing loved ones hurts, coping with sin daily is a fight to the death for me. I need the stuff of first importance, Pastor."

"That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). Scriptures like Isaiah 53: "He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed." "That He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me," says Paul (1 Cor. 15:4–8).

A congregation of several factions thought their new pastor would bring them together. He had an idea. They had three wonderful, big windows in the front of the church, and they had three factions. The pastor thought it'd be great if they did a stained-glass project together, and he wanted to focus on new life, resurrection, new beginnings. And he thought of this verse from today's Gospel, Matthew 28: "Do not be afraid. ... Jesus who was crucified ... is not here, for He has risen" (vv. 5–6).

And they thought they would have the three different factions of families that had been sparring and warring do one pane each. They raised the money for the first pane and put it up right in the center. "He is not here."

And then they got to fighting again about it. They didn't like the colors. And so, the other two factions backed out. They were left right over the altar with this window that said, "He is not here."

Well, it's a fake story by John Kleinig, but it's crazy enough to be true. It's probably true somewhere out there. My friends, Christ is here. The God-man is among us, even us, despite all of our sins and weaknesses and failings. He is here. He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and the right hand — as Luther taught and the Psalms teach — is wherever God's power is. Christ is there.

And Luther says so wonderfully, the resurrection is distributed by His Word and His Sacrament. You are beloved, you are forgiven, you are here, and you are His.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

OPINION OF THE COMMISSION ON CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Ariz.

July 19, 2026

District Church Extension Funds, Agencies of the Synod (26-3082)

By an email of July 17, 2026, a member of the Synod, a district president, requested an opinion on whether district church extension funds (CEFs) are agencies of the Synod.

Opinion: The commission has previously addressed this question as part of a broader review of the Southern District Church Extension Fund and its governing documents. In Op. 11-2605 (Minutes of May 11-13, 2011), the commission found that “[p]ursuant to various actions of the Synod in convention, districts have been authorized to create district church extension funds. As such, by definition under Synod Bylaw 1.2.1 (a), such entities are agencies of the Synod within the meaning of that bylaw.” The definition of *agency* has not changed in the intervening years since that opinion, and neither has the commission’s conclusion.

Bylaw 1.2.1 (a) defines an *agency* as “[a]n instrumentality other than a congregation or corporate Synod, whether or not separately incorporated, which the Synod in convention or its Board of Directors has caused or authorized to be formed to further the Synod’s Objectives (Constitution Art. III).” Where an entity possesses the three elements stated—namely: that it (i) is an instrumentality, (ii) that is created or authorized by Synod in convention or Synod’s Board of Directors, and (iii) that furthers the Synod’s objectives—the entity is without doubt an agency. We do not address the question of what an entity, formed by corporate Synod or an agency of the Synod, would be, that lacks one or more of these elements. But here all three elements are present. We take each in turn.

For the first element, district CEFs are, in essence, the instruments by which church extension activities are funded within a district (for those districts that do not participate in the Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod, or LCEF). The commission notes that the Southern District Church Extension Fund was a separately incorporated entity from the Southern District. However, not all district CEFs are separately incorporated. The fact of whether or not a district CEF is separately incorporated is a distinction, for this purpose, without a difference. The definition of *agency* in Bylaw 1.2.1 (a) expressly applies to instrumentalities “whether or not separately incorporated.”

For the second element, as indicated in Op. 11-2605, “[p]ursuant to various actions of the Synod in convention, districts have been authorized to create district [CEFs].” In reviewing the history of church extension work done by the Synod and its districts, August Suelflow traced this to the Commission for Support, established in 1889. The Synod’s establishment of this commission was reflected in the districts (each district being the Synod in that place), where “the chief burden of rendering the above services [at first, support for needy congregations] rested.” Conversation between the Home Mission Board and the Board of Support suggested the creation of a dedicated Church Extension Board in 1902 as a “church construction treasury.” A commission for this purpose was established in 1905, with provision for close coordination, again, with corresponding district commissions (1905 *Proceedings*, p. 70, cited in Suelflow, *Administrative Structure of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod from 1897–1961, report 3C to the Synodical Survey Commission*, Aug. 1961). In the 1924 *Handbook*, Article X under Regulations for Officers, Boards, and Committees of the Synod provides regulations for the Church Extension Board. Included in those regulations is a provision that “[o]nly such congregations for which their own District cannot provide shall receive non-interest-bearing loans out of this Fund.” (Art. X A 4). Clearly, there was contemplated the existence of district CEFs. This is also explicit at the time of creation of LCEF. 1979 Res. 4-01A, which created the initial bylaws for LCEF, recognized that “[s]upervision, coordination, and regulation of all *District Church Extension programs* will, to the same extent as in the past, be provided as long as necessary by the Synod’s Board for Church Extension, operating under Synod’s bylaws” (emphases added). Synod’s countenancing of district CEFs was further evidenced in that same convention by 1979 Res. 4-02, which resolved that “the Synod assure Districts that District entry into [LCEF] shall be voluntary and only on the basis of the decision of the individual District.” In other words, Synod was explicitly allowing district CEFs to continue until the districts desired to cede that function to LCEF. The initial LCEF bylaws from 1979 also provided, in Bylaw 8.51(b), “[u]ntil such time that all Districts of the Synod conduct the Church Extension activities through [LCEF], there shall also be a Board for Church Extension of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.” That language, and the Board for Church Extension of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, continues today in Bylaw 3.10.7. Among the responsibilities given to this board is the power to establish policies governing district CEFs (Bylaws 3.10.7—3.10.7.1). While not an exhaustive listing, the preceding examples clearly evidence the acknowledgment and approval of Synod in convention to having district CEFs.

As for the third element, this, too, has been addressed in a prior opinion of this commission. In Op. 24-3043, the commission had occasion to trace the constitutional basis for church extension activities. The commission wrote:

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“The financial and administrative work of church extension (i.e., principally, building and maintaining properties for member congregations, schools, and recognized service organizations), as performed by the Lutheran Church Extension Fund and a few remaining district funds, is thus comprehended, albeit not obviously or explicitly, in the Synod’s second constitutional objective, along with the rest of a limited class of generally “strengthening” activities contemplated in Art. of Inc. II, as noted above, but not explicitly enumerated in Const. Art. III. Synod is to “strengthen[] congregations...in giving bold witness by word and deed” (Const. Art. III 2) by serving “as an organization designed to serve congregations as God uses them to extend His kingdom” and as a vehicle of “congregations organized to strengthen one another for service” (1979 Res. 2-03) and thus to support materially as well as spiritually “the joint extension of the Kingdom of God” (pre-1979 Const. Art. III 2).”

With all three elements being present, district CEFs are “agencies” under Synod’s Bylaws.

The fact that an instrumentality predates the creation of the term *agency* in Synod’s Bylaws does not alter the result of the analysis. Certainly, such an instrumentality would not have been called an agency prior to the genesis of that term in the Bylaws, but there is no “grandfathering” under the Bylaws. The Synod has the ability to change terms, rules, obligations and the like as it deems necessary or advisable. Any change in terminology or modification of requirements does not reduce the applicability of the revised Bylaws to entities that existed prior to such changes.

Lastly, it would create an illogical result if an agency of Synod were able to create an instrumentality, to perform one of its functions, that is unshackled by the restraints placed upon the agency in performing that same function. An agency is only able to give that which it receives, which, in this case, would be restrictions on its actions (cf. 1981 Res. 5-07).

Scott Killian, *Secretary Pro Tempore*

RESOLUTION ACTION REPORT

Floor Committee (continues on next page)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
01	A/Ad. Am. (1)	A/Adopted CC (1)		Adopted (2)		
02	Ad. Am. (1)	A/ Adopted (2)		A/Adopted (2)		
03	A/ Adopted (1)	A/ Adopted (2)		Adopted (2)		
04	Adopted CC (1)	Adopted (2)				
05		Adopted (2)				
06				A/Adopted (2)		
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Key Adopted / Ad.: Adopted Declined / Dc.: Declined Pending / Pd.: Pending before assembly
 Ad. Am.: Adopted *as amended* Proposed / Prop.: Proposed A/, B/, C/, etc.: Action on published revised resolution
 CC.: Consent Calendar (#): Action in session #

Example: In column 2, row 05: A/Ad. Am. (3): Res. 2-05A was adopted as amended in session 3.

This table, updated daily, is provided for your convenience and the information contained herein is unofficial. The official record is contained in the convention minutes produced by the Secretary and will be published in the *Convention Proceedings*.

Floor Committee (continued from previous page)

	7	8	9	10		
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18					Omnibus Resolution A	Adopted (2)
19					Omnibus Resolution B (TB, 2B:266-67)	Adopted (2)
20					Omnibus Resolution C	Adopted (2)

Key Adopted / Ad.: Adopted Declined / Dc.: Declined Pending / Pd.: Pending before assembly
 Ad. Am.: Adopted as amended Proposed / Prop.: Proposed A/, B/, C/, etc.: Action on published revised resolution
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Example: In column 2, row 05: A/Ad. Am. (3): Res. 2-05A was adopted as amended in session 3.

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CONSENT CALENDAR

Preamble

Standing rule 10 states, “any remaining resolutions may be placed on a consent calendar if they are deemed by the chair to be non-controversial, courtesy, or honorific in nature and it shall require 10 percent of voting delegates to remove said resolution from the consent calendar. All resolutions not successfully removed shall be adopted without further action of the convention. The chairman may publish in each day’s *Today’s Business* a consent calendar for consideration that day.”

WHEREAS, the following have been presented by the President for adoption as part of the day’s consent calendar and not removed by request of at least ten percent of the voting delegation; therefore be it

Resolved, That the following resolutions shall stand adopted and be so reflected in the minutes and proceedings of the convention:

<u>Resolution</u>	<u>Title</u>
Res. 1-05A	To Prioritize Revitalization Work
Res. 1-08A	To Educate Young People
Res. 1-13A	To Strengthen the Synod's Digital Witness and Congregational Connections
Res. 1-14	To Give Thanks for Lutheran Hour Ministries and Encourage Enhanced Collaboration
Res. 6-03	To Give Thanks for the Office of the Holy Ministry and our Synod’s Pastors
Res. 9-01A	To Amend Bylaws 1.5.3.2–4 and Add Bylaw 4.7.6 regarding Regulations for Committees
Res. 9-02A	To Amend Bylaws 1.5.1.2–1.5.2 to Clarify Service Expectations and Handling of Conflicts of Interest
Res. 9-03	To Amend Bylaws regarding Doctrinal Review
Res. 9-04	To Amend Various Bylaws for Purposes of Clarification or Improvement
Res. 9-05	To Amend Bylaw 3.6.4.3 to Increase the Number of Lutheran Church Extension Fund Directors Elected by the Synod in Convention from Three to Four
Res. 9-06	To Amend Bylaws 3.6.1.8 (c) and 3.6.4 (a) to Clarify that Two-Thirds Approval Requirements for Synodwide Corporate Entity and Lutheran Church Extension Fund Governing Document Amendments are Based on Members Actually Present at Meeting
Res. 9-07	To Amend Bylaw 3.6.4.3 to Clarify That No More Than Two Lutheran Church Extension Fund Directors Can Be from the Same District

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REVISED RESOLUTIONS

4. LIFE TOGETHER

To Clarify Oversight and Revitalize Role of Registered Service Organizations

RESOLUTION 4-04B

Report R1 (*CW*, 1–5); Overtures 4-32–35 (*CW*, 319–22); President’s Report, Part 2, (*TB*, 1:28); Overture L4-57 (*TB*, 1:46–48)

WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention created a task force to review the current structure and recommend the best model for the Synod’s relationship to recognized service organizations (RSOs) (Res. 4-03B, “To Convene Task Force to Review Recognized Service Organization Program and Bylaws,” *Proc.*, 146–47); and

WHEREAS, The 2019 Synod convention adopted the recommendation of the task force in Resolution 4-06A, “To Amend Bylaw Section 6.2 to Revitalize Synod’s Recognized Service Organization Program” (*Proc.*, 137–42), and began implementing the vast new recommendations; and

WHEREAS, 2019 Resolution 4-06A (*ibid.*) granted RSOs numerous privileges, under the ecclesiastical oversight of district presidents who report any concerns to Synod’s mission offices (Office of International Mission or Office of National Mission) (Bylaw 6.2.1 [b–c]); and

WHEREAS, The Synod Board of Directors (BOD), Board for International Mission, and Board for National Mission were charged with creating policy for RSO oversight, and implementation delegated to staff; and

WHEREAS, “Over the past five years, 115 organizations have been granted RSO status; in the same period, 77 have been terminated, denied or withdrawn. Of those 77, 49 organizations did not represent LCMS doctrine and practice adequately and RSO status was ended.” (President’s Report, Part 2, *Today’s Business*, 1:28); and

WHEREAS, Some mercy service organizations (Bylaw 6.2.2 [c]) have been influenced by law or controlling regulation, on occasion, to facilitate actions contrary to the Word of God; and

WHEREAS, Other organizations intentionally promote and facilitate actions contrary to the Word of God; and

WHEREAS, The role and work of faithful RSOs are to be commended, celebrated, and encouraged; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod remain patient as the RSO Office and Synod continue implementing all the revisions from the 2016 task force and 2019 resolution that resulted in the current Bylaw section 6.2, “Recognized Service Organizations” in collaboration with the appropriate district president; and be it further

Resolved, That the RSO Office keep the BOD apprised of legal and regulatory constraints which may burden an RSO’s religious exercise, and the BOD be encouraged to monitor this area for potential to stand with our organizations in the unfettered “extension of the divine mercy without compromising the church’s scriptural and confessional standards” (Bylaw 6.2.2 [c]), to which they may be entitled under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States or other laws protecting religious liberty, and thus with those RSOs striving to remain faithful; and be it further

Resolved, That the RSO Office withdraw RSO status from organizations that intentionally promote actions contrary to the Word of God, including but not limited to unnatural or unbiblical family structures; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention give thanks for the work of our many faithful RSOs.

5. THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

To Address the Public Reading of Scripture in Public Worship

RESOLUTION 5-09A

Report R62.11 (*CW*, 269–70); Overtures 5-26–29 (*CW*, 352–54)

WHEREAS, The public reading of Scripture is an integral part of Christian worship services, as seen in the New Testament (Acts, 1 Timothy 4) and throughout Christian history; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) advised the following concerning the public reading of lessons in its 1985 report, *Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice* ([adopted 1985], 45):

All Christians have access to the Scriptures. They do not require the church as an institution or another person to read and interpret them on their behalf. The reading of the Scriptures belongs to the priesthood of all believers, men and women.

Moreover, there is no ceremonial law in the New Testament regarding the reading of Scripture in the context of public worship. Nor is there explicit apostolic prohibition of such reading by women. Nevertheless, it is the opinion of the CTCR 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. Pastors and congregations should therefore exercise great care in making decisions permitting the lay reading of the Scriptures or any other activity in the formal liturgical services which might be perceived as an assumption of the pastoral role or a disregard for the Scriptural principles concerning the service of women in the church (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:3–16; 14:33b–35);

and

WHEREAS, The CTCR also advised that certain distinctive functions of the pastoral office should ordinarily be carried out only by clergy of the Synod, including “preaching in the services of the congregation, leading the formal public services of worship, the public administration of the sacraments, [and] the public administration of the office of the keys” (ibid., 42), though this was not an exhaustive list; the referenced 1981 report, *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*, stated, “No specific ‘checklist’ of functions of the office of the public ministry is presented in the Scriptures (15); and

WHEREAS, The 1989 Synod convention cited these statements by the CTCR approvingly, yet did not endorse the opinion of the CTCR 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,” but instead advised that congregations “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, “To Address Appropriate Roles for Women and Men in Worship,” *Proc.*, 118); and

WHEREAS, Considerable tensions have since arisen over the lay reading of Scripture lessons in public worship, with some believing that men and women are free in the Gospel as the priesthood of believers to serve as readers in the church, others believing that men and especially women may not serve as readers, and still others arguing that the pastoral reading of lessons is mandated by Scripture (1 Tim. 4:13) or that women reading the lessons contradicts the admonition of St. Paul that a woman ought not “to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet” (1 Tim. 2:12); and

WHEREAS, these distinct approaches deserve proper study; and

WHEREAS, In response to these concerns, the CTCR has published numerous documents addressing the topic, including: *Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice* (1985), *The Order of Creation: Theology, History, Definition* (2022), and *Unity in Doctrine, Uniformity and Variety in Practice* (2025); and

WHEREAS, It must also be acknowledged that not all formal public worship services necessarily exclude laity from officiating or participation, especially the traditional prayer offices (Matins, Vespers, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer) and other non-communion services (or when a pastor is not available due to extraordinary circumstances); therefore be it

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Resolved, That the Synod urge its congregations not to provoke or engage in needless controversy, but teach, reprove, correct, train, and ultimately persuade one another solely by the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16–17); and be it further

Resolved, That the above-mentioned documents of the CTCR be commended to the Synod for their instruction and guidance in discussing the matter of the lay reading of Scripture lessons in public worship; and be it further

Resolved, That the two seminary presidents appoint a committee of faculty members that will offer a joint theological opinion on 1 Tim. 4:13 and other related passages and how those passages relate to the public reading of Scripture in congregational worship services and who should attend to those readings, and that these opinions be submitted to, studied, and evaluated by the Council of Presidents (COP) with input by the CTCR at its discretion; and be it further

Resolved, That the COP and seminary faculties discuss this topic in detail at their annual joint meeting no later than 2028; and be it finally

Resolved, That the COP and the appointed seminary committee report on their discussion, evaluation, and conclusions no later than six months prior to the next Synod convention.

6. PASTORAL MINISTRY AND SEMINARIES

To Uphold a Deep and Broad Study of Holy Scripture and Book of Concord in Synod Seminaries

RESOLUTION 6-01A

Overtures 6-01–8 (*CW*, 363–66)

WHEREAS, Pastors of the Synod vow in the rite of ordination to teach in accordance with Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, have historically grounded pastoral formation in sustained, direct engagement with the text of Holy Scripture in the original languages; and

WHEREAS, Faithful pastoral ministry requires not merely acquaintance with the biblical text through secondary sources, but the ability to read, translate, and interpret Holy Scripture firsthand for preaching, teaching, catechesis, pastoral care, evangelism, and defense of the faith; and

WHEREAS, The church benefits when pastors are formed to handle the Word of God with confidence rooted in direct textual study rather than dependence upon external aids alone; and

WHEREAS, St. Paul pronounces every word of Scripture as “God-breathed and useful” (2 Tim. 3:16 NIV) and declares and defends the Gospel of Christ with arguments based on the precise wording of the sacred Scriptures; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Luther warned that the devil himself seeks to deprive the Church of the biblical languages (Luther’s Works 45:358) and also perceived that nothing less than the Gospel itself was at stake (*ibid.*, 359); and

WHEREAS, The Book of Concord serves as the Church’s binding doctrinal confession because (Latin: *quia*) it faithfully confesses the teaching of Holy Scripture, as set forth in the Formula of Concord (FC Ep, Summary Content); and

WHEREAS, Pastoral formation within the Synod requires more than familiarity with the Lutheran Confessions, but sustained study that forms pastors who confess, teach, and practice theology in full accord with them; and

WHEREAS, The unity of the Church is preserved when pastors are formed to interpret Scripture and conduct ministry within the shared doctrinal framework of the Lutheran Confessions; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has consistently affirmed *quia* subscription to the Lutheran Confessions as foundational to pastoral formation and ecclesial trust; and

WHEREAS, We need Master of Divinity pastors equipped and capable to supervise vicars and interns, and to oversee specific ministry pastors; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod’s seminaries, across all their programs, maintain and enhance courses of study that attend to careful, thorough study of Holy Scripture and ensure that all pastors certified for ordination demonstrate strong knowledge of and glad reception of “the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the ... only true standard or norm by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged” (FC SD, Comprehensive Summary, 3); and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod reaffirm and encourage the seminaries to maintain and deepen rigorous instruction in the original languages of Holy Scripture, emphasizing direct translation and exegetical engagement with the biblical text, resisting trends toward reduced or merely introductory engagement with the biblical languages in pastoral formation; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod’s seminaries be commended and encouraged to fully commit to and persist in forming pastors who are capable of independent, faithful handling of the scriptural text in the original languages for the sake of the church’s preaching and teaching; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod’s seminaries instill in our future pastors those habits and disciplines that maintain the ongoing study of Scripture, including the knowledge and use of the biblical languages, throughout a lifetime of ministry, and that circuits and districts foster and encourage the same; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod reaffirm and encourage the seminaries of the Synod to maintain and deepen comprehensive, integrated instruction in the Book of Concord throughout the curriculum and extended throughout a lifetime of ministry, and that circuits and districts foster and encourage the same; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod reaffirm and encourage the seminaries to continue making the Lutheran Confessions a hermeneutical and theological framework shaping all pastoral instruction; and be it further

Resolved, That the seminaries of the Synod be encouraged to form pastors whose preaching, teaching, and practice flow from a robust quia commitment to the Lutheran Confessions and to ensure that all pastors certified for ordination demonstrate knowledge of and glad reception of the Lutheran Confessions; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to God for the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and pray for pastors who confess them faithfully in doctrine and life.

To Support Residential Master of Divinity and Residential Alternate Route Pastoral Formation for the Sake of the Flock

RESOLUTION 6-04A

Report R13.1–3 (*CW*, 64–74); Overtures 6-25–44 (*CW*, 379–91)

Preamble

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has repeatedly identified full-time, residential pastoral formation at its seminaries as the standard, preferred route for men preparing for a lifetime of ministry to the church (2016 Res. 6-03, “To Affirm the Master of Divinity Route at the Synod’s Seminaries”; 2019 Res. 6-02, “To Promote Residential Seminary Education as the Preferred Option for the Preparation of Men for Pastoral Ministry”; 2023 Res. 6-02A, “To Encourage Proper Pastoral Formation through Our Synod’s Seminaries”; 2023 Res. 6-03A, “To Affirm and Strengthen the Synod’s Commitment to Well-Formed Clergy for the Sake of the Gospel”). Several overtures submitted to the 2026 Synod convention (Ov. 6-28–37) call for the seminaries to attempt to duplicate the quality and scope of its regular residential program in the format of a fully or largely online Master of Divinity (M.Div.). While the Synod has made successful use of some online and distance education models for other routes to ministry designed to serve specific and unique needs, experience has shown that there is no true replacement for what residential seminary formation provides. This resolution expresses the conviction that, for the sake of the flock (Jer. 3:15; John 10:1–5, 21:15–19; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1–5), it would be unwise for our seminaries to begin or experiment with an online M.Div. because of the distinct, qualitative benefit of full-time pastoral formation in our seminary communities and because the assumption that adding an online M.Div. program would increase the overall number of pastoral students is unfounded.

WHEREAS, There is no other way that the Lord brings sinners to faith, salvation, and eternal life than through His blessed Word and Holy Sacraments (AC V); and

WHEREAS, The Lord has appointed in and for His church ministers of His Word so that it may be publicly applied and used in truth and purity; and of His blessed Sacraments, so that they might be administered rightly and according to His command (AC VII 1); and

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WHEREAS, The Lord requires of His ministers that they “be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2) to such an extent that for their conduct in the Office they “[must] give an account” (Heb. 13:17; see also James 3:1); and

WHEREAS, It is a right of the Church to be assured—indeed, to demand—that her pastors are doctrinally sound and capable and ready to serve as pastors (Rom. 10:14–17; Hos. 4:6; 1 Timothy 3–4; Tr 67); and

WHEREAS, In the history of the Bible the Lord used formational and educational communities to shape His servants for this work (2 Kings 2–6; Acts 19–20), thereby ensuring that they would “hold fast the pattern of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13 NKJV) and be ready, whether it seemed convenient or inconvenient, to wield God’s Word and Sacraments for the faith, salvation, and eternal life of the Lord’s blood-bought sheep (2 Tim. 4:2); and

WHEREAS, The daily rhythm of worship in the seminary chapels, which as an integral aspect of residential seminary education inculcates humility toward God’s Word, is central for the personal and spiritual formation of pastors (Ap V 189); and

WHEREAS, The education and formation of a future pastor is much more than the sum of all its parts—it requires among other things:

- extensive knowledge in the interpretation of Holy Scriptures for preaching, teaching, and pastoral care (1 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 15:4);
- deep reading of the Lutheran Confessions and the orthodox Fathers;
- keen understanding of the Church’s history (there is no prophetic or apostolic proclamation but that it is not also deeply rooted in the history of the Gospel and God’s people with an understanding of their telos) so as not to repeat the errors of the past and to walk to the eschatological horizon with confidence;
- deep immersion in the inevitably liturgical life of the Lutheran Church and her song;
- precise and discerning comprehension of the dynamic of Law and Gospel and the ability to apply it to sinners; and
- clear discernment of all the teachings of the Holy Scriptures according to the pattern of sound words;

and

WHEREAS, The essence of the education and formation of a future pastor is the shaping of a man in Christ for Christ-like sacrificial service to the flock (1 Peter 5:2–3; Phil. 2:5–8), feeding and guarding Christ’s sheep, and gathering new sheep into Christ’s one flock (John 10:16); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord became flesh and dwelt among us, and in his flesh gathered the future pastors of his church to himself, men who “accompanied” him (Acts 1) as he carried out his ministry and instructed his future pastors; and

WHEREAS, Pastors are called to share not only the Gospel but also their very lives by being with people in all their service (1 Thess. 2:8); and

WHEREAS, The residential formation of pastors gathers students into a community of men in the physical presence of their teachers and fellow students, where their identity as pastors is formed, their brotherhood is shaped, and “iron sharpens iron” (Prov. 27:17) as they live, eat, talk, and work together in the flesh; and

WHEREAS, The ministers of Christ must be prepared to go where they “do not want to go” (John 21:18), to have no place to lay their head (Matt. 8:20), to let the dead bury their own dead and not to plow with a backward gaze; and those unwilling to do such are not fit for the ministerial work of Christ (Luke 9:60–62; Matt. 8:18–22); and

WHEREAS, Residential pastoral formation as currently constituted in the Synod immerses seminary students in numerous ministerial contexts and under numerous theological experts and pastoral practitioners (all of whom have been appointed by the church for this purpose) so that they may become all things to all men that by any means they may save some (1 Cor. 9:22); and

WHEREAS, This broad exposure is a bulwark against idiosyncratic theology and practice that can lead to disunity and false teaching; and

WHEREAS, The unity of the Synod is better cultivated when future pastors are formed in a residential setting that enables them to live out the liturgical life of the church and experience an extended time of “mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren” (SA III IV) that will prepare them to conduct ministry within the shared doctrinal framework of the Lutheran Confessions (Lawrence R. Rast, Jr., “The Biblical and Reformation Heritage of LCMS Pastoral

Formation,” 2023 *Proceedings*, 107–9; Thomas J. Egger, “Our Residential Seminaries: Deep Pastoral Formation and Worldwide Impact,” *Proc.*, 109–11); and

WHEREAS, The adoption of online M.Div. programs by other seminaries has failed to bring about an increase in M.Div. enrollment (Report R13.3, 2026 *Workbook*, 70); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has been blessed through nine generations of pastors with men formed in this fashion to the high standards of the Office of the Holy Ministry and for the sake of the flock; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank the seminaries for offering, maintaining, and constantly enhancing robust residential pastoral formation in their M.Div. and Residential Alternate Route (RAR) programs; and be it further

Resolved, That for the sake of the flock, the Synod in convention directs the seminaries to redouble their efforts to improve their residential pastoral formation in the M.Div. and RAR programs and continue to address concerns regarding the accessibility and feasibility of residential formation; and be it further

Resolved, That for the sake of the flock, the Synod in convention affirms our corporate commitment to robust residential M.Div. and RAR pastoral education and formation as highlighted in both seminaries’ reports to the convention; and be it further

Resolved, That for the sake of the flock, the Synod prays for an increase in candidates for the pastoral office, trusting the Lord of the Church to provide faithful shepherds (Luke 10:2); and be it further

Resolved, That for the sake of the flock, the Synod in convention reaffirm 2023 Resolution 6-02A, “To Encourage Proper Pastoral Formation through Our Synod’s Seminaries” (*Proc.*, 160–61) (see also 2016 Res. 6-03, 2019 Res. 6-02; 2023 Res. 6-03A); and be it finally

Resolved, That for the sake of the flock, the Synod in convention reject online M.Div. and RAR education and commend the seminaries’ commitment to residential M.Div. and RAR education.

To Reaffirm the Synod’s Process for Training and Certification for Pastors

RESOLUTION 6-05A

Report R13.3 (*CW*, 68–70); Overtures 6-14–24 (*CW*, 370–79)

Rationale

Article III of the Synod’s Constitution lists the following among the objectives of the Synod:

1. Conserve and promote the unity of the true faith ...
3. Recruit and train pastors ...

To accomplish these objectives, the Synod has established seminaries, various routes to ministry, and a robust procedure for training and certifying pastors (ministers of religion—ordained). As a rule, this procedure requires that each man who is to be placed in the Office of the Ministry gains the approval of (at minimum) his home congregation, home district, resident field work supervisor, vicarage supervisor, seminary faculty, and the Council of Presidents (COP). The Synod Bylaws assign specific roles in this process to the seminary faculties. This duty informs every aspect of the calling, activity, and oversight of seminary faculty members (Bylaw sections 2.7–8).

In recent years some members of the Synod have expressed a desire to change this procedure in significant ways, including removing certification from the seminary faculties or opening up the colloquy process to LCMS laymen and commissioned ministers who have attained a Masters of Divinity (M.Div.) degree (or its equivalent) at a non-Synod seminary. Among those making these suggestions have been former seminary faculty members and former and current leadership from some districts (Report R13.3, *CW*, 68–70).

The 2023 Synod convention responded to these developments by passing 2023 Resolution 6-02A, “To Encourage Proper Pastoral Formation through Our Synod’s Seminaries.” This resolution expressed the Synod’s corporate decision to continue to train and certify pastors exclusively through the Synod’s own seminaries and routes to ministry.

In early 2025, a group of former Concordia Seminary faculty announced that they would be operating an accredited online-only M.Div. program through the “Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT) ... known as the Center for Missional and Pastoral Leadership (CMPL)” (Report R13.3, *CW*, 68). In subsequent podcast appearances, the dean of CMPL has indicated that around two dozen LCMS laymen are enrolled in CMPL in a ministry degree program (M.Div. or M.Min.).

While the leadership of CMPL freely admit that their program cannot currently lead to pastoral service within the Synod or any other denomination, in public letters and in podcasts, the dean of this program has suggested the Synod change its procedure for training and certification of pastors in such a way that LCMS laymen or commissioned ministers who graduate from this program (or potentially other institutions) could be certified for the Synod's roster of ministers of religion—ordained.

Thus, CMPL leadership insists that they are not setting up an institution that is a competitor to the Synod's seminaries since they tell all of their students that their degrees cannot currently lead to certification within the Synod. Yet they meanwhile advocate for changing the Synod's procedures to allow for it. Since the M.Div. is virtually coterminous with pastoral formation in the Synod, this will lead to confusion and an inevitable crisis in the near future when the first of these LCMS laymen or commissioned ministers will have graduated with their ministry degrees (M.Div. or M.Min.) from CMPL (or other institutions).

The COP discussed these matters in April 2025 and tried to ward off this crisis by committing themselves unanimously: "Our Synod needs pastors for all our congregations and mission outreach. We implore the Lord of the Church to send them. We commit ourselves to direct potential students for the pastoral office only to the routes to ordination approved by and accountable to Synod. The Council will not place graduates from other programs. The Council members agree not to ordain graduates from other programs. We commit ourselves to engage the Church, our Synod's seminaries, and Pastoral Formation Committee to strengthen the routes to ordination and address the challenges and opportunities for providing the Church well-formed candidates for the pastoral ministry" (Roy Askins, "LCMS Addresses Unauthorized, Non-LCMS Pastoral Formation Programs," *Reporter Online*, May 8, 2025, reporter.lcms.org/2025/lcms-addresses-unauthorized-non-lcms-pastoral-formation-programs/).

This is consistent with the Synod's longstanding position since facing a similar challenge in the 1970's: "The question rather is: 'How has the Synod decided that it wishes to have pastors trained, qualified, called, ordained, and installed in its congregations?' In answer to that question the Synod has spoken again and again. Perhaps no other subject receives as much attention in the bylaws. The Synod has stated in great detail that it will train its own pastors, set its own requirements, do its own certifying, etc." (CCM Op. 26-3076, "Participation in Nonapproved Pastoral Formation Routes," quoting Ag. 682, "Constitutional Comments on the Present Controversy Within the Synod," Minutes of Oct. 11, 1974).

In light of all this, it is appropriate for the Synod in convention to clearly reaffirm our current procedures for the training, certification, and placing of pastors. If nothing else, those LCMS laymen studying for ministry degrees at CMPL (or Luther House of Studies or any other institution) and their home congregations deserve to have clarity: ministry degrees earned outside of the Synod's own seminaries and routes to ministry cannot be a path to service as a pastor (minister of religion—ordained) in the Synod (Bylaw 3.10.2.4). The Synod has no plans to change this procedure. These topics have been discussed throughout the Synod for several years now. The arguments for changing our procedures are well understood by all. They have been discussed and debated at conferences, the Pastoral Formation Committee, on podcasts, and at the COP. And now two consecutive conventions of the Synod have weighed these arguments, decided against them, and reaffirmed the exclusive use of Synod owned-and-operated seminaries and routes to ministry. This assures that from generation to generation a unified Synod is served by faithful, well-formed pastors trained in a manner fully accountable to the congregations and pastors of Synod.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention reaffirm 2023 Res. 6-02A; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention reaffirm the routes to the Office of the Ministry created by the Synod as the only routes to certification, ordination, and service as ordained ministers of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention specifically reaffirm these procedures: vesting certification with the seminary faculties, vesting placement with the COP, and barring "LCMS laymen and commissioned ministers who complete a program of study leading to ordination or its equivalent at a non-LCMS seminary" from being "eligible for colloquy on that basis" (Bylaw 3.10.2.4); and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention reaffirm that "the LCMS has continually developed and refined its residential and nonresidential routes to ordination in order to address the needs of the church as they have arisen and dynamically changed through time" (2023 Res. 6-02A) within the overall framework noted in the previous Resolved; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention reaffirm its call to all members of Synod to "honor, use, and promote Synod-approved programs and not create independent programs of pastoral preparation or direct men to pastoral

preparation programs outside of our Synod's seminaries as such efforts are not in accord with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod (Const. Art. III 3; Bylaw 3.10.4)" (2023 Res. 6-02A).

To Affirm and Support Established Parameters of Specific Ministry Pastor Program

RESOLUTION 6-06A

Report R13.5 (*CW*, 75–76); Overtures 6-46–63 (*CW*, 392–403)

WHEREAS, The Synod established the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program to address pastoral needs in specific contexts where calling a residentially-formed pastor is not feasible; and

WHEREAS, Specific ministry pastors provide essential service in ministries that would not otherwise receive pastors, keeping congregations from closing and enabling many of them to flourish under their leadership; and

WHEREAS, Specific ministry pastors make significant sacrifices, often serving bi-vocational ministries while working other jobs to support their families; and

WHEREAS, The SMP program was intentionally designed as a limited and contextual pathway, distinct from the Master of Divinity program; and

WHEREAS, The Synod has consistently affirmed that alternative pastoral formation programs exist to serve exceptional circumstances and are not intended to replace residential seminary education; and

WHEREAS, The *Policy Requirements for the Specific Ministry Pastor Program* (Report R13.5 [*CW*, 75–76]) have been unanimously approved by the boards of regents (BOR) of both seminaries and establish policies born of two decades of SMP experience and churchwide discussion, including provision for warranted exceptions; and

WHEREAS, The presidents and BOR of both seminaries, in consultation with the Council of Presidents (COP), provide ongoing oversight of pastoral formation pathways to ensure faithfulness to Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and Synod policies; therefore be it

Resolved, That district presidents and congregations adhere faithfully to the approved SMP policies, so that they should be given opportunity to demonstrate their effectiveness and impact, emphasize the benefits of residential seminary formation, and prioritize residential seminary formation whenever possible; and be it further

Resolved, That the presidents and BOR of both seminaries, in consultation with the COP, be encouraged to continue regular oversight and evaluation of the SMP program to ensure it remains consistent with its original purpose and stated intent; and be it further

Resolved, That these contextual limits do not diminish the dignity of the one Office of the Holy Ministry into which specific ministry pastors are ordained; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod give thanks to God for faithful specific ministry pastors who serve under call for the sake of Christ's Church.

To Encourage and Support Specific Ministry Pastors to Pursue General Pastor Certification

RESOLUTION 6-07A

Overtures 6-46–48 (*CW*, 392–94)

WHEREAS, The Synod is blessed with faithful specific ministry pastors who serve under call for the sake of Christ's Church; and

WHEREAS, Specific ministry pastors, the congregations they serve, and the Synod as a whole are blessed when specific ministry pastors pursue the hybrid General Pastor Certification (GPC, ordinarily achievable in an additional three years), the Residential Alternate Route (RAR) Program, or the Master of Divinity (M.Div.), enabling them to deepen their theological understanding, learn biblical Greek, and serve the Synod in additional roles of responsibility (circuit visitor, district or Synod officer or board member, pastoral delegate at Synod convention, etc.); and

WHEREAS, Many specific ministry pastors desire to pursue GPC but are limited due to financial constraints and limits on access to needed classes; therefore be it

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Resolved, That the Synod encourage specific ministry pastors to pursue hybrid GPC, the RAR Program, or the M.Div.; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage the pastors' congregation(s), district, and seminary to work collaboratively to fund all tuition and fees for specific ministry pastors pursuing GPC; and be it further

Resolved, That the seminaries work in partnership with each other and prospective GPC candidates to accommodate the schedules of students (evening courses, intensive classes, etc.); and be it finally

Resolved, That we give thanks for the specific ministry pastors who have completed or are in the process of completing the GPC.

The Chief Financial Officer and LCMS Accounting and Financial Services staff, in consultation with the Finance Committee, note no incremental costs to corporate Synod but that districts and seminaries will bear costs related to collaborative funding of "all tuition and fees" (estimate required by Bylaw 3.1.7 [g]).

To Implore Council of Presidents to Fulfill 2019 Resolution 6-03A re Oversight of Specific Ministry Pastors

RESOLUTION 6-09A

Overtures 6-54, 63 (*CW*, 397, 403)

WHEREAS, Synod Bylaw 2.13.1 states that every specific ministry pastor "shall serve under the supervision of his district president and another pastor who is not a specific ministry pastor"; and

WHEREAS, There is a great variety of specific ministry pastors serving in a wide variety of contexts and with a great variety of education, years of service, and gifts; and

WHEREAS, This situation has created a number of questions regarding the amount and level of oversight that shall be employed as per Synod Bylaws; and

WHEREAS, The 2019 Synod convention adopted Resolution 6-03A, "To Enhance the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program," which includes the resolve, "That the Council of Presidents in coordination with the Pastoral Formation Committee draft guidelines and training to enhance the mentoring and supervision of specific ministry pastors, taking into account the wide variety of abilities of pastors and the contexts in which they serve, to assist district presidents, circuit visitors, and supervising pastors in supporting the [specific ministry] pastors under their care" (*Proc.*, 159–60); and

WHEREAS, These guidelines and training are in process of being completed and in need of being promulgated throughout the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The number of specific ministry pastors continues to increase, thereby creating a growing and continuing need for such guidance and training; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention implore the Council of Presidents (COP) to complete this important assignment quickly and with due attention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention commend to the COP, as a reference, the supervision plan included in 2026 Report R13.6 ("Report on the Development of a Comprehensive, Uniform, Synodwide Specific Ministry Supervision Plan," *Workbook*, 77–82) and encourage consultation with seminary SMP program directors concerning their approaches to training and support for SMP mentors and SMP vicarage supervisors; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod in convention thank the COP for their service and efforts.

To Amend Bylaws to Reinsert 2007 Pastoral Colloquy Bylaws from Policy Manual

RESOLUTION 6-12A

Overtures 6-11–13 (*CW*, 367–70)

WHEREAS, The 2010 Synod convention removed numerous pastoral colloquy bylaws and added Bylaw 3.10.2.2 (a) (Res. 8-08A, "To Realign National Synod Ministries around Two Mission Boards"), which directs the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry (CCPM) to develop, instead, policies that are now in the *Policy Manual for*

1 *Admission to the Pastoral Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by Colloquy (CCPM Policy Manual,*
2 *files.lcms.org/dl/f/pastoral-colloquy-policy-manual); and*

3 WHEREAS, For 61 years prior to the 2010 Synod convention (i.e., from 1949–2010), the Synod Bylaws for pastoral
4 colloquy, as contained in the *Handbook*, reflected the more fulsome details of policy and procedure that existed in the
5 Bylaws; and

6 WHEREAS, In response to the 2010 Synod convention action, the CCPM placed the removed bylaws into its policy
7 manual; and

8 WHEREAS, These former bylaws (now policies) have changed a little bit in the 16 years since then, though a
9 large percentage of the material remains unchanged; and

10 WHEREAS, As is the case with policy manuals in general, the *CCPM Policy Manual* can be changed at any
11 time by the four-member CCPM; and

12 WHEREAS, There are many important requirements for pastoral colloquy that have been in place for many years
13 and it would be wise to involve a larger representative body in a more deliberate process with regard to changes;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, The well-known *Handbook* is a more accessible place to house these important requirements for
16 pastoral colloquy rather than the lesser-known *CCPM Policy Manual*; and

17 WHEREAS, This overture does not seek or intend to introduce to the Bylaws any substantial changes to the
18 requirements for pastoral colloquy as contained in the *CCPM Policy Manual*; therefore be it

19 *Resolved*, That Bylaw 3.10.2.2 be amended as follows:

20 ~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

21 ***B. Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry***

22 ...

23 3.10.2.2 The Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry shall establish and monitor academic, theological, and
24 personal standards for admission to the office of the pastoral ministry by colloquy after consultation with
25 the faculties of the seminaries. It may consider and approve those applicants who meet the requirements
26 for eligibility as specified in this bylaw and concerning whom no valid objection is made pursuant to
27 paragraph (c). In consultation with the President of the Synod, it shall develop any necessary additional
28 policies to govern eligibility and the process to be followed to determine qualifications and suitability for
29 pastoral service in the Synod.

30 (a) ~~In consultation with the President of the Synod, it shall develop all necessary policies to govern~~
31 ~~eligibility and the process to be followed to determine qualifications and suitability for pastoral service~~
32 ~~in the Synod. Only such male applicants shall be considered eligible to apply for colloquy who are:~~

33 (1) ministers in good standing in other Christian church bodies (or independent congregations),
34 are graduates of programs of study leading to ordination of no less than 60 semester hours or the
35 equivalent thereof in length from accredited institutions, and have served at least three years in a
36 recognized ministry of their church body, unless granted an exception to either of these last two
37 requirements by the colloquy committee; or

38 (2) graduates of programs of study leading to ordination of no less than 60 semester hours or the
39 equivalent thereof in length from accredited institutions, who have been communicant members
40 in good standing of congregations of the Synod for at least two years immediately prior to the
41 time of application (unless granted an exception to either of these last two requirements by the
42 colloquy committee), and whose congregations adhere to Bylaw 2.5.2; or

43 (3) pastors emeriti from other church bodies. If certified by the committee, they may be placed
44 on the roster of the Synod according to Bylaw 2.7.5.

45 (b) Applicants for colloquy shall be directed to the president of the district where the applicant resides.

46 (1) The district president shall refer the applicant to a district interview committee, who shall
47 give a report and recommendation to the district president.

48 (2) The district president shall recommend qualified applicants to the chairman of the colloquy
49 committee. Such recommendations shall be processed according to the policies and procedures
50 adopted by the Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry.

- (c) The colloquy committee shall publish notice of its intent to interview an applicant in an official periodical of the Synod unless the applicant requests such notice be delayed until after his interview.
- (1) If no valid objection is received by the committee within 30 days after the publication of such notice, the applicant may be interviewed.
- (2) If the applicant was interviewed first, notice shall then be published and upon publication 30 days be given for valid objections to be received.
- (3) The committee, in its sole discretion, shall decide whether an objection is valid. Its decision shall not be the subject of any appeal.
- (d) The colloquy committee shall arrange for an in-person colloquy, or discussion, with qualified applicants. The decision on each applicant shall be made on the basis of the colloquy application and examination and shall be the sole prerogative of the colloquy committee.
- (e) The criteria by which the colloquy committee shall determine an applicant's readiness for certification are to be based upon adopted standards, including, but not limited to:
- (1) areas of general education;
- (2) understanding of and agreement with the scriptural and doctrinal positions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod;
- (3) familiarity with the history and polity of the Synod;
- (4) studies in theology assuring a well-rounded education in the major fields of theological discipline;
- (5) positive experience in the work of the pastoral ministry; and
- (6) demonstrated moral character ("above reproach").
- (f) The colloquy committee, at its sole discretion, shall determine the content and amount of academic work, personal study programs, or supervised ministry that may be required prior to certification. To this end, the committee may assign residential and/or online seminary coursework, mentored readings, and/or a formal vicarage or a shorter informal internship.
- (g) The committee, at its discretion, may require a second colloquy interview following the completion of such study and/or supervised ministry.
- (h) Decisions to declare applicants qualified for the pastoral ministry and to certify for placement shall be at the sole discretion of the committee.
- (i) The committee shall:
- (1) certify for placement those applicants against whom no valid objection has been made who have satisfactorily completed the colloquy interview and any other requirements as assigned by the colloquy committee;
- (2) report this action to the applicant, the Office of Pastoral Education of the Synod, and to the appropriate district president; and
- (3) publish a report of its favorable action in an official periodical of the Synod.
- (j) Every applicant whom the committee declares qualified shall be assigned his first call by the Council of Presidents acting as the Board of Assignments.
- (k) The colloquy committee shall report to the Synod in convention.

7. UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

To Amend Bylaw 3.10.6.2.2

RESOLUTION 7-02A

Overture 7-10 (CW, 425)

WHEREAS, The 2023 Synod convention adopted Resolution 7-04B, "To Revise Bylaws to Revisit and Renew Relationship of Colleges and Universities with the Synod" (*Proceedings*, 170–90); and

WHEREAS, 2023 Res. 7-04B significantly changed the way that the Synod relates to the universities of the Concordia University System (CUS); and

WHEREAS, Part of 2023 Res. 7-04B establishes mandatory training for the regents of the universities of the CUS;
and

WHEREAS, That training is now codified in Bylaw 3.10.6.2.2, its subparagraphs (a–d) further describing such training; and

WHEREAS, The required training has been initiated and is ongoing; and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.10.6.2.2 (d) has been subject to several interpretations and has caused some confusion regarding the training required of regents appointed or elected between conventions of the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.10.6.2.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

F. Concordia University System Boards of Regents

...

3.10.6.2.2 ~~Persons elected or appointed to~~ Members of a board of regents shall undergo training for such service.

(a) The Concordia University System and Synod Board of Directors shall provide for training of ~~elected and appointed~~ regents concerning their responsibilities under the Synod Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions, to advance the Synod's confession and mission objectives and to advance their respective institutions in service of the church through the Concordia University System visitation program.

(b) The chair of each board of regents shall, subject to guidelines prepared by the Concordia University System Institution Advisory Council after input from Concordia University System, provide training of ~~elected and appointed~~ regents in the task of governance and in their business and legal duties as regents.

(c) The training under (a) and (b) above shall be provided ~~within one year after each Synod convention and at least annually between Synod conventions as follows: (1) a comprehensive training within six months after each Synod convention; and (2) an annual training until the next Synod convention.~~

(d) Every training session under (a) above, both comprehensive training and annual training, shall be recorded to allow for remote participation and completion of the training for those unable to attend in-person training sessions.

(de) After each Synod convention, every regent must complete the comprehensive training provided following the most recent Synod convention within six months after the training is provided or within six months of being seated, whichever is later. Failure to complete the initial comprehensive training within the first year after the first Synod convention after a regent is elected or appointed six months after the training is provided or within six months of being seated renders the regent ineligible to continue in office. Upon such failure, the respective board of regents shall declare the position vacant.

~~(e) Training programs, initial and continuing, may allow for electronic or remote participation.~~

(f) Concordia University System, in collaboration with its Institution Advisory Council and the Synod Board of Directors, shall prepare and make available a summary of the demands and expectations of service as a college or university regent, including their responsibilities under the Synod Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions. This summary shall be reviewed and confirmed by nominees as a condition to being eligible to serve if elected or appointed.

(g) The cost of the development of the regent training by CUS and Synod Board of Directors shall be funded by the CUS; the cost of regent participation in the training shall be funded per capita by the institutions.

To Amend Bylaw 3.6.6.1

RESOLUTION 7-03A

Overture 7-09 (CW, 425)

WHEREAS, Bylaw 3.6.6 states that the Concordia University System (CUS) Board of Directors (BOD) is to assist with the cooperation and coordination of the Synod's colleges and universities in the "preparation of commissioned ministers for service in the Synod and of pre-seminary students for study at a Synod seminary"; and

WHEREAS, There is perceived ambiguity between Bylaw 3.6.6.1 (b) and (g); therefore be it

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Resolved, That Bylaw 3.6.6.1 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Concordia University System

...

3.6.6.1 The Concordia University System Board of Directors shall:

...

(b) upon the request from a Concordia university, review and approve new implementations ~~of~~ and discontinuances, ~~whether actual or constructive,~~ (whether actual or in practical effort) of programs of study leading to one of the professional church work in the interest of the institution(s) and the Synod ministries of the Synod;

...

(g) receive, revise, and recommend to conventions of the Synod for approval any proposals for creating, essentially revising, ~~or~~ renaming, or eliminating programs of study and certification for commissioned ministry;

...

and be it further

Resolved, That the CUS BOD's work be commended to the care and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**To Encourage University Worship Practices That Form Students
to be Faithful to Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions**

RESOLUTION 7-06A

Overture 7-06 (*CW*, 423–24)

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention (2023 Res. 7-04B, “To revise Bylaws to Revisit and Renew Relationship of Colleges and Universities with the Synod”) revised Bylaw 3.6.6 to direct the Concordia University System (CUS) Board of Directors to develop and adopt Lutheran Identity Mission Outcome Standards (LIMOS), which were adopted in February 2024, including Identity Standard 2.1, that states, “The ecclesiastical mission and goals are clearly and consciously pursued in the design and delivery of campus worship;” and Identity Standard 2.1.5 of the LIMOS Evaluation Tool asks, “How is commitment to the church’s heritage and unity reflected in the use of liturgies, hymnals, and hymnody?” and “Describe the regular pattern of chapel services noting liturgies and hymnals used and those who serve as preacher and liturgists” (CUS, “Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards *with* Evaluation Tool,” Feb. 1, 2024; cus.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/LIMOS-Evaluation-Tool.pdf); and

WHEREAS, Fostering a consistent approach to worship practices across the congregations, universities, and seminaries of the Synod strengthens the unity of the Synod and provides a coherent witness to students, congregations, and the broader community; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church has long heeded the apostle’s injunction that all things be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14) by, for example, joyfully and freely receiving the church’s historic orders of prayer (e.g., Matins, Vespers, Compline, etc.) and the historic order of the Divine Service (e.g., the *Ordo* as described in 2016 Res. 4-04A, “To Appeal to the LCMS Congregations, Workers, and Institutions within Christian Freedom and for Love’s Sake to Retain a Common Order of Service for the Lord’s Supper”) as a precious gift from previous generations of Christians; and

WHEREAS, It is simply not necessary for the true unity of the Christian Church that ceremonies instituted by human custom should be observed uniformly in all places (AC VII 3); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran reformers could insist that those church usages that have been established by human authority ought to be observed, provided they could be observed without sin and without the erroneous opinion that they justified (AC XV), for the sake of training the unlearned in the faith (AC XXIV 3); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran reformers confess that the churches of God in every locality and age have authority to order the ceremonies of worship in such ways as are fitting and profitable for the edification of the communion of saints in particular times and places (FC Ep X 4) and so that the weak in faith might not be scandalized (FC Ep X 5); and

WHEREAS, The reformers also authored church orders, such as the *Church Order for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel*, published in English by Concordia Publishing House (2015), which show how evangelical freedom may fruitfully be joined with a grateful reception and creative appropriation of the church's living liturgical and hymnological heritage; and

WHEREAS, The church orders evidenced variation in the details of the humanly established ceremonies from place to place, yet all within the order received from previous generations; and

WHEREAS, Constitution Article III 7 states, "The Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions shall— ... 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 confession of faith"; and

WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has appealed to our congregations and workers to welcome and encourage the development and use of new hymns, spiritual songs, and liturgical settings, which continually are called forth by the Holy Spirit, not as a supplanting of what has come before, but as a supplement to it, its living growth (2016 Res. 4-04A); and

WHEREAS, Const. Art. VI 4 requires the "exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school"; and

WHEREAS, The chapels of the Concordia universities are fertile training grounds for all students, faculty, and staff to learn and grow in joyful, reverent, Christ-centered worship; and

WHEREAS, The adoption of *Lutheran Service Book* (LSB) in 2006 provided a common, unifying liturgical and hymnological foundation for our life together as a Synod; and

WHEREAS, The CUS Board and its Campus Worship Committee, which includes representatives from each of the Concordia universities, is earnestly working to develop a plan for consistent Lutheran worship, spiritual life and pastoral care on the Concordia campuses; therefore be it

Resolved, That worship life in the chapel services and across the campuses of the CUS is to be planned, practiced, and aimed at the goal of forming all students, faculty, and staff to be scripturally-faithful Christians, grounded in Lutheran doctrine and practice, and active members of Synod congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That use of LSB is encouraged as the benchmark, and that other worship materials and practices should be doctrinally pure (Const. Art. VI 4); and be it further

Resolved, That the CUS Board and its Campus Worship Committee continue working to foster a rich, faithful, and distinctly Lutheran worship and spiritual life throughout the CUS, including "an appreciation of a variety of responsible practices and customs which are in harmony with our common profession of faith" (Const. Art. III 7); and be it finally

Resolved, That the CUS Board include in its report to the 2029 Synod convention the progress of its Campus Worship Committee.

To Clarify *Lutheran Identity* in Connection with the Concordia Universities

RESOLUTION 7-07A

Overtures 7-04–07 (CW, 422–24)

WHEREAS, The 2023 Synod convention (Res. 7-04B, "To Revise Bylaws to Revisit and Renew Relationship of Colleges and Universities with the Synod," *Proceedings*, 170–72) revised Bylaw subsection 3.6.6 to direct the Concordia University System (CUS) Board of Directors (BOD) to develop and adopt Lutheran Identity Mission Outcome Standards (LIMOS), which were adopted in February 2024 (in.lcms.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/LIMOS-2024.pdf); and

WHEREAS, The LIMOS are used during official CUS visitations of the Concordia universities, the goal being to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each university relative to the Lutheran identity standards adopted by the Synod (2016 Res. 7-01A, "To Adopt Lutheran Identity Statement for CUS Institutions as Prepared by CUS Presidents," *Proc.*, 171–72); and

WHEREAS, The first round of evaluations of the Concordia universities by the CUS has recently been completed; and

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WHEREAS, Following this initial round of evaluations, some questions have been raised as to the breadth and depth of the term *Lutheran identity*, and especially as to how it should be understood in connection with, and applied to, our Concordia universities; and

WHEREAS, The Lord is a God of clarity and order, and it is good, right, and salutary for His Church to seek clarity and order in all things; therefore be it

Resolved, That the CUS BOD, in consultation with the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, shall define and clarify what is meant by *Lutheran identity* in connection with our Concordia universities, and shall issue a report to the 2029 Synod convention, at the same time issuing the same report to the boards of regents of our Concordia universities; and be it further

Resolved, That the CUS BOD shall continue to utilize, and develop further as necessary, the LIMOS, while strengthening and clarifying them with references to the scriptural and confessional bases for the standards, and making the updated, strengthened, and clarified LIMOS available to the Synod on the CUS website.

To Study Synodwide Corporate Status of Concordia University System

RESOLUTION 7-08A

Overtures 7-01–03 (*CW*, 417–22); Late Overture L7-30 (*TB*, 1:49)

WHEREAS, Overture 7-01, “To Amend Bylaws to Convert Concordia University System, the Synodwide Corporate Entity, into Commission for University Education,” was submitted by the LCMS Board of Directors (BOD) for consideration at the 2026 Synod convention; and

WHEREAS, Overtures 7-02 and 7-03, “To Affirm and Sustain Concordia University System as Synodwide Corporate Entity,” were put forward by the Concordia University System (CUS) Board of Directors and St. John Lutheran Church in Springfield, Pa., respectively; and Overture L7-30, “To Affirm and Retain Concordia University System as Synodwide Corporate Entity,” was put forward by the Concordia University, Nebraska Board of Regents; and

WHEREAS, Overtures 7-01–03 and L7-30 are irreconcilable with one another; and

WHEREAS, The BOD submitted Overture 7-01 in the interests of its duty to attend to financial and liability issues of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, CUS no longer carries out business or line-of-credit management functions on behalf of the universities, resulting in there being no need for a separate corporation; and

WHEREAS, CUS is served by corporate Synod accounting and audit functions already, making its operations easily assimilable, and the transition of CUS to a commission from a synodwide corporate entity, potentially practicable; and

WHEREAS, The monumental shifts in the landscape of higher education, both within and outside the Synod, make it difficult to fully assess and evaluate the impact of such a transition of CUS at this time; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the BOD and the CUS Board of Directors, in consultation with the Institution Advisory Council, to analyze the relative strengths and weaknesses between retaining the CUS as a corporation and converting the CUS into a commission of the Synod, and propose the best model to the 2029 convention.

The Chief Financial Officer and LCMS Accounting and Financial Services staff, in consultation with the Finance Committee, estimate incremental cost to the named entities, for in-person meetings, of \$75,000 (estimate required by Bylaw 3.1.7 [g]).

To Give Thanks for Work and Ministry of Concordia University Ann Arbor

RESOLUTION 7-09A

Overture 7-27 (*CW*, 435)

WHEREAS, The congregations and people of the Michigan District and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have treasured a close relationship with Concordia University Ann Arbor (CUAA) since its founding in 1963; and

WHEREAS, In July 2013, an affiliation between CUAA and Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW) became official, which enabled the campus to continue providing for the spiritual development of students; including those who

were being converted and baptized through the work of the Holy Spirit, choosing church work careers, and having a greater desire to embrace the Christian faith and our Lutheran confession; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention give thanks to God for the mission and ministry of CUAA since its founding in 1963, including the years with CUW, as well as what lies ahead; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention acknowledge the grief and sorrow of many over the current reduction of programs; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod commend all past and present leaders of Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor (CUWAA) as well as the entire Synod for their support of the mission and ministry of CUAA since its founding and their remarkable efforts to sustain the ministry in Ann Arbor as a part of CUWAA for the last decade, for their communication of the vision, and for their encouragement and support of the many faculty and staff, to the glory of God; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod, with united hearts and voices give thanks and praise to God for the blessings He has bestowed upon the kingdom at large through the work of His Holy Spirit and the ministry which has been done and is being done in Ann Arbor; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage CUWAA to develop church work programs on the Ann Arbor campus; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod affirm its commitment to and support for all our Concordia universities; and be it finally

Resolved, That the assembly rise and join in singing the common doxology as an expression of thanksgiving.

8. FINANCE

To Amend Bylaw Section 3.7 to Clarify Additional Assigned Responsibilities and Provisions on the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans / Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services

RESOLUTION 8-02A

Reports R1, R1.2–1.2.2, R1.2.4–R1.3, R5–R8, R15–57 (CW, 1–5, 15–28, 31–37, 46–56, 95–141); Overtures 8-01–02 (CW, 437–38)

WHEREAS, Bylaw section 3.7 currently describes the responsibilities of Concordia Plan Services (CPS) and those it serves in terms that no longer fully reflect its present scope of responsibilities and service. For example, this year Synod’s Board of Directors (BOD) has authorized formation of an entity, Concordia Risk Solutions, a captive insurance company, to provide for property and casualty insurance and reinsurance within the Synod, an activity the BOD delegated to the Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services consistent with Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) Opinion 24-3043, “Concordia Plan Services Property Casualty Insurance Program” (minutes of the BOD, May 23–24, 2026, item 199 [M]); and

WHEREAS, The same opinion (CCM Op. 24-3043) recommended that “the Synod Bylaw description of the work of CPS to be amended by the next convention to include this new activity, even if already entered into”; and

WHEREAS, The change of the bylaw should clarify that amendments are intended to include the synodwide trust manager, CPS, under the same provision for assignment of additional areas of work by the BOD to be consistent with Bylaw 3.6.1.1; and

WHEREAS, The sophistication of the services being provided continue to increase, the proposed amendments would update board composition and qualification requirements to reflect the expertise necessary for overseeing benefit, investment, and captive insurance company operations, and to otherwise align with the operations and requirements of the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans and the Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw section 3.7 be amended as follows:

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PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**3.7 Synodwide Trust Entities**

3.7.1 The synodwide trust entities of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are collectively known as the Concordia Plans.

The Concordia Plans

...

3.7.1.2 Concordia Plan Services is also responsible for managing other ancillary programs, including various supplemental insurance and administration services programs and the Support Program, and Concordia Risk Solutions.

(a) The Support Program of the Synod is not a trust but rather a program of financial assistance to those eligible ordained and commissioned ministers and their eligible dependents who are in financial need. This aid is in the form of a gift from the budgeted funds of the Synod. Eligibility standards shall be determined by the Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services.

(b) There exists and may be added in the future various ancillary supplemental insurance and administration services that will be made available to ~~member organizations and their employees~~ member congregations and their schools, corporate Synod, and agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and their employees. These programs are not trusts and will be under the supervision of the Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services.

(c) Concordia Risk Solutions serves as a captive insurance company to insure and/or reinsure risks of member congregations and their schools, corporate Synod, and agencies, auxiliaries, and recognized service organizations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

3.7.1.3 The Board of Trustees of Concordia Plans and the Board of Directors of Concordia Plan Services shall consist of 16 members. The 15 voting members shall be appointed by the Board of Directors of the Synod. All newly appointed members shall begin service on the September 1 following appointment, except with an appointment to fill a vacancy, when service shall begin on the first day of the month in which the next regular meeting of members occurs after appointment. The representative designated by the Board of Directors of the Synod shall be the nonvoting member. Voting members shall be appointed to three-year terms, which shall not exceed four terms in a successive period. The 15 voting members shall include:

1. Two ministers of religion—ordained
2. One minister of religion—commissioned
3. Twelve laypersons, at least ~~five~~three of whom shall be significantly experienced in the design of employee benefit plans (at least one in health and one in retirement), at least ~~five~~three of whom shall be significantly experienced in the management of benefit plan or institutional investments, preferably, on a scale at least comparable to that of the Plans, and at least one~~two~~ of whom shall have significant financial/audit experience. In addition, each layperson appointed shall possess significant experience in at least one of the foregoing or of the following, preferably of a scope and scale commensurate with the work of the Plans: benefit, employment, insurance, or religious organization law; health care or health benefit administration; governance or administration of complex organizations, including those of the Synod; health or benefit public policy; regulatory compliance; or actuarial science.

3.7.1.4 The Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans and the Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services shall have all general and incidental powers and duties appropriate for the performance of their functions (as described in these Bylaws, including Bylaw 1.2.1 [d–e]). ~~In addition, the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans will have as well as the powers and duties set forth in the respective plans, as amended from time to time. For the purposes of this bylaw, “the board” refers to the trustees/directors acting either as the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans or Board of Directors—Concordia Plan Services, as appropriate to the case.~~ ~~The board~~ may create or amend any plan within limits established by the Board of Directors of the Synod so long as such changes are reported to the Synod’s Board of Directors, since such power is finally vested in the Synod’s Board of Directors.

(a) When the Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans is carrying out its functions with respect to any such separate plan, it may be designated as the board of trustees of such separate plan.

(b) When the board is carrying out its functions generally, it may be designated as the “Board of Trustees—Concordia Plans of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.”

(c) The board may, at its own discretion, make investment decisions or select and utilize investment counsel and select agents and actuaries.

(d) ~~The board~~ shall design for the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s approval benefit plans which compare favorably with other similar plans while meeting unique needs of the full-time church workers in the Synod.

(e) ~~The board~~ shall provide copies of all audit reports to the Board of Directors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for information, advice, and counsel.

(f) ~~The board~~ shall settle disputes which arise in enrollment in the plans and the payment of claims and benefits.

(g) The board shall organize itself and elect a chair and vice-chair:

(1) At the first meeting following September 1 after each convention of the Synod; and

(2) Otherwise, if a majority of the board so determines in the first meeting following appointment of a new individual or individuals to the boards.

3.7.1.5 The position of chief executive shall be filled according to the process outlined in Bylaw 3.6.1.5.

3.7.1.6 The assignment of new areas of responsibility, beyond those assigned in the Bylaws, to Concordia Plan Services or to any of its subordinates listed in Bylaw 3.7.1.2, shall be according to the process outlined in Bylaw 3.6.1.1.

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 3.6.1.1 be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

3.6 Synodwide Corporate Entities

General Principles

...

3.6.1.1 Formation of a synodwide corporate entity, or assignment of a new area of responsibility to an existing one, shall require the approval of the Synod in convention or the Board of Directors of the Synod.

(a) At least six (6) months prior to such approval of the formation of a synodwide corporate entity, or sixty (60) days prior to the assignment of a new area of responsibility to an existing corporate entity, an announcement thereof shall be given in an official publication of the Synod together with a detailed explanation of the problems or factors that make the formation of the proposed synodwide corporate entity or assignment of new responsibility advisable or necessary.

(b) The announcement shall include an invitation for members of the Synod to submit comments thereon to the Board of Directors of the Synod.

(c) If the Board of Directors forms a new entity or assigns a new area of responsibility, it shall report its action to the Synod promptly and in a special report to the next Synod convention and it shall propose bylaw amendments reflecting the new entity or assignment.

To Expand Access to the Lutheran Confessions

RESOLUTION 8-04A

Reports R1, R1.2, R1.2.1–2, R1.2.4–5, R1.3, R5–8, R15–57 (*CW*, 1–5, 15–28, 31–37, 46–56, 95–141); Overtures 8-09–12 (*CW*, 441–43)

WHEREAS, The objectives of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, as stated in Constitution Article III, include the following: “conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3–6; 1 Cor. 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy”; and 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, We pray in the collect for the Church that “Thy Word, as becometh it, may not be bound, but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ’s holy people” (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 14); and

WHEREAS, The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Lutheran Confessions), as listed in Const. Art. II “as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God,” are an indispensable resource for achieving the primary objectives of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, Concordia Publishing House (CPH) is the official publishing house of the Synod; and

WHEREAS, CPH in 2006 published the Lutheran Confessions under the title: *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions—A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord*, 2nd edition (*Reader’s Edition*); and

WHEREAS, The *Reader’s Edition*, with its historical introductions and other included materials, presents the Lutheran Confessions most intelligibly and clearly, is a generally preferred English translation among native and non-native English speakers alike, and is the preferred source for most derivative translations into other languages; and

WHEREAS, CPH has recently made public the website *bookofconcord.cph.org* that contains the confessional text of the *Reader’s Edition* (2nd ed.), but, as of yet, the website does not include any of the notes or annotations; and

WHEREAS, Since the website went live in January 2026, there have been over 32,000 active users from 139 countries, visiting over 180,000 pages (site statistics from CEO, Jonathan Schultz); therefore be it

Resolved, That we commend CPH for making the *Reader’s Edition* (2nd ed.) easily available as of January 2026 and for their endeavor to provide such resources as evidenced by the upcoming release of the Spanish version of the *Book of Concord*; and be it further

Resolved, That CPH explore the feasibility and cost of adding the helpful notes and annotations from the *Reader’s Edition* (2nd ed.) to its online publication at *bookofconcord.cph.org* and likewise include that as part of its report to the next convention of the Synod.

To Give Thanks for Concordia Publishing House’s Use of Bible Translations

RESOLUTION 8-05A

Overtures 8-07–08 (*CW*, 440–41)

WHEREAS, We accept without reservation that the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament are “the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice” (Const. Art. II); and

WHEREAS, Passages of Holy Scripture are used throughout the hymnals, catechisms, and other printed resources of the Synod: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16); inasmuch as is feasible and prudent, we should endeavor to have translations that are consistent and faithful; and

WHEREAS, Throughout our history going back even to Luther, Bible translations have never been fully stable; even Luther revised his German Bible multiple times, and English translations in Synod hymnals have shifted from the King James Version to the New International Version to the English Standard Version (ESV); and

WHEREAS, In 2003, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations cautiously noted the challenges presented by different English Bible translations, declined to adjudicate among them, and left the Commission on Worship to choose which translation to use for the *Lutheran Service Book* (*LSB*); and

WHEREAS, 2004 Resolution 2-03A, “To Accept *Lutheran Service Book* and *Agenda* as an Official Service Book and Hymnal of Synod” (*Proc.*, 124) approved the *LSB* with the ESV translation and rejected an amendment to allow voting on the translation used; and

WHEREAS, Some pastors and congregations have noted that the holder of the copyright for the ESV, Crossway Publishing, has made changes to the ESV text; and

WHEREAS, Concordia Publishing House (CPH) has received permission from Crossway Publishing to omit changes to the ESV text on subsequent printings of its resources; and

WHEREAS, CPH gives preference in its resources to the ESV in its resources, which CPH has authority from Crossway Publishing to continue using the edition adopted, as it aligns with the *LSB*, which was approved by Synod and adopted by well over 90 percent of our congregations (Matthew C. Harrison, “Singing the Gospel,” *The Lutheran Witness*, Oct. 2, 2019, *witness.lcms.org/2019/singing-the-gospel*); therefore be it

Resolved, That we give thanks to CPH for its continued efforts to identify and utilize available translations that best serve the mission of the Church, and further support its faithful stewardship and partnership with Synod.

9. STRUCTURE AND ADMINISTRATION

To Amend Bylaws 1.5.3.2–4 and Add Bylaw 4.7.6 regarding Regulations for Committees

RESOLUTION 9-01A

Overture 9-01 (*CW*, 449–50)

Rationale

The Commission on Constitutional Matters, noting frequent issues encountered in applying Bylaw section 1.5 to the committees of districts, universities, and other agencies of the Synod, referred the language to the Commission on Handbook for study and potential revision. The following is the proposal of the latter commission, intended to clarify the bylaw language dealing with regulations for committees. It was designed in light of the standard language used in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th edition, especially sections 49–50 (Sarah Corbin Robert, Henry M. Robert III, William J. Evans, Daneil H. Honemann, Thomas J. Balch, Daniel E. Seabold, Shmuel Gerber, eds. [New York: PublicAffairs, 2020]), for various types of committees and to address concerns about committee constitution and authority across the board, rather than (as the present bylaws do) allowing certain narrow structural categories while remaining silent on others. The new bylaws focus on types of committees (Bylaw 1.5.3.2), the authority and responsibility of committees (Bylaw 1.5.3.3), and the constitution of committees (Bylaw 1.5.3.4). Finally, language is added to Bylaw section 4.7 to account for district committees that are established by district bylaw or district convention resolution, so that it will be clear that such committees are not subject to the requirements imposed by Bylaws 1.5.3.2–4 on committees of a board or commission. These revisions will provide significantly improved clarity and appropriate levels of both flexibility and regulation for corporate Synod and the agencies of the Synod with regard to their committee needs.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaws 1.5.3.1–4 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

Organization

...

1.5.3.1 ~~Unless otherwise stipulated in these Bylaws, at the initial meeting after members take office under new terms filled by regular election or appointment (including the regular election or appointment of any fraction of the members),~~ all mission boards, commissions, and governing boards shall organize themselves as to chair, vice-chair, secretary, and other standing committees and positions as necessary or mandated by these Bylaws and shall conduct business in accordance with accepted parliamentary rules.

~~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, to act on delegated assignments, and to act as specified elsewhere in these Bylaws.~~

~~(a) Executive committees may not perform acts specifically required by statute or by legislation or the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod to be performed by the agency, nor may they overturn actions of the agency.~~

~~(b) All executive committee actions shall be reported to plenary sessions of the agency.~~

~~1.5.3.3 All mission boards, commissions, and governing boards may also delegate a specific assignment for a limited time to a committee composed of its own members.~~

~~1.5.3.4 All mission boards, commissions, and governing boards may appoint standing committees of specialists to provide professional or technical assistance to the board or commission and may delegate certain responsibilities to such committees while retaining supervision. Standing committees may be made up of or include non-board or commission members. The creation of standing committees shall be reported to the President and the Board of Directors of the Synod.~~

1.5.3.2 All mission boards, commissions, and governing boards (“plenaries”) may establish and appoint committees as follows:

(a) A standing committee is established explicitly in bylaws or plenary resolution or policies to perform a specified, continuing function. The creation of a standing committee shall be reported to the President and Board of Directors of the Synod.

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(b) An *ad hoc* committee is established by resolution of the plenary to accomplish a specified task of limited duration, upon the completion of which it is automatically discharged.

(c) The *executive committee*, a specific type of standing committee composed of board or commission members only, may act with the authority of the plenary (i) in times of necessity between plenary meetings and/or (ii) on assignments specifically delegated by the plenary. It may also be assigned additional functions, as described below.

(d) The *audit committee*, another specific type of standing committee, is comprised of financially literate and independent directors, oversees for the plenary the related incorporated organization's financial reporting process, selects an independent auditor, and receives the audit.

1.5.3.3 The authority and responsibility of a committee of a mission board, commission, or governing board, as well as any special rules applicable to such, are to be specifically set forth in the establishing bylaw, policy, or resolution, subject to the following:

(a) Committees may not perform acts specifically required by statute or the Constitution, Bylaws, and resolutions of the Synod to be performed exclusively by the plenary, nor may they overturn actions of the plenary.

(b) Except for executive committees acting in emergencies, any committee charged "with power" to do more than report findings or recommendations to the plenary shall be empowered to act only (i) upon specific instructions of the plenary or (ii) under standing powers clearly delineated in bylaw, policy, or resolution.

(c) The granting of standing authority to a committee to act for the plenary in any area without specific instructions, or the designation of any business to be automatically referred to a committee, or the impact in any other way of the parliamentary procedure of the plenary by a committee shall: (i) require, if not effected by bylaw, a two-thirds vote of the plenary; (ii) be reported to the President and Board of Directors of the Synod; and (iii) require the submission of any related policies, upon adoption or subsequent amendment, to the Commission on Constitutional Matters for review.

(d) The plenary shall retain supervision of any responsibilities delegated to committees, receiving and regularly reviewing their minutes, except for such executive sessions of committees as have been authorized by the plenary.

(e) Each standing committee shall report to each regular plenary session.

(f) Any action of a committee taken upon authority delegated by the plenary (including actions of an executive committee taken in times of necessity) shall be reported to the members of the plenary within two weeks or at the next regular meeting, whichever is sooner.

1.5.3.4 Except as otherwise provided by these Bylaws, a committee of a mission board, commission, or governing board shall be constituted as follows:

(a) A standing or executive committee shall comprise members appointed by ballot of the plenary or by nomination by the plenary members.

(b) An *ad hoc* committee may be comprised of members appointed by ballot of the plenary, by nomination by the plenary members or chair, or by appointment by the chair, as designated by the plenary.

(c) Unless otherwise specified in bylaws or plenary policies, service in a committee appointment is at the pleasure of the plenary. Any potential committee member conflicts of interest shall be disclosed to the plenary, under Bylaw 1.5.2.

(d) The plenary may appoint as members of a committee, other than its executive committee, individuals who are not members of the plenary, provided that: (i) they provide necessary professional or technical expertise; (ii) such appointment is reported to the President and Board of Directors of the Synod; and (iii) such appointees do not vote on any action taken by the committee with authority delegated by the plenary, except where the committee acts upon specific instructions of the plenary.

(e) Committees may form subcommittees of their own members or others, including others only as specifically authorized in their constituting bylaws, policies, or resolution, as applicable, and subject to the same requirements stated in (d).

and be it further

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.7 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**4.7 District Nominations, Elections, and Appointments**

...
 4.7.6 A district convention may, by bylaw or resolution, create standing or *ad hoc* committees responsible to the district. These shall act on specific assignments or within authority delegated and shall conduct business in accordance with accepted parliamentary rules. Unless these are committees of the board of directors of the district, the provisions of Bylaws 1.5.3.2–4 do not apply to them.

**To Amend Bylaws 1.5.1.2–1.5.2 to Clarify Service Expectations
 and Handling of Conflicts of Interest**

RESOLUTION 9-02A

Overture 9-02 (*CW*, 450–51)

Rationale

Bylaw section 1.5 provides regulations applicable to all agencies of the Synod, including provisions dealing with ethical standards, conflicts of interest, and removal from office. These date, at least in their modern form, to a Commission on Structure project that culminated in 2007 Resolution 7-07A, “To Revise Bylaw Section 1.5 and to Add Definitions to *Handbook*,” itself an outgrowth of the 2004 revision of the *Handbook*’s revision of agency-related language. The original statement of the conflict-of-interest policy dates to 1995 (Res. 4-05A, “To Replace Present Bylaws on Conflict of Interest”). (Bylaw 1.5.1.3 is part of the former “general regulations” and not properly part of the conflict-of-interest policy, but relevant to it.)

The Secretary noted to the Commission on Handbook three aspects of the present language requiring attention: (1) While potential conflicts should be identified to the extent possible in advance, the determination of whether there is an “inappropriate interest” being acted upon (Bylaw 1.5.2 [a][4]) depends on a situation arising in the work of the potentially conflicted individual (or the board or commission of which the individual is a part) to which the potential conflict is material. It is at that time the conflict would need to be processed by the board, but this timeline aspect is not evident in the present language, leading to confusion in practice. (2) The connection between the determination of Bylaw 1.5.2 (a)(4) that “an inappropriate interest exists” and the practical impact of such determination is unclear. The only apparent consequences are 1.5.2 (b)(3)’s remote and less-than-general “no one shall vote . . .,” less-than-general because it deals only with the possibility of “direct or indirect financial gain.” It seems obvious that the member having an “inappropriate interest” would be expected to recuse himself with regard to certain matters (or perhaps, if the conflict is sufficiently general, resign), but this is not so plain. (3) Adding to the unclarity is that it is not so apparent how Bylaws 1.5.1.3 and 1.5.2 (b) and (b)(1–2) relate to the standards for removal from office for board or commission members, in Bylaw 1.5.7, or for officers, Bylaw 1.5.8, unless they fall generally under “breach of fiduciary responsibilities.”

The commission has proposed a revision that pulls Bylaw 1.5.1.3 into Bylaw 1.5.2, clarifying the relation of this standard to the rest of the provision, addressing the above issues, and further addressing the scope of the provision to clarify that conflicts are not strictly limited to matters of personal financial gain, but can involve other situations where an officer or board or commission member might have or appear to have competing loyalties.

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 1.5.1.2–1.5.2 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**1.5 Regulations for Corporate Synod and Agencies of the Synod*****General***

...
 1.5.1.2 No one, either in the Synod or a district, or between the Synod and a district, shall hold more than one elective office; or hold more than two offices, although one or both be appointive; or ever hold two offices of which one is directly responsible for the work done by the other. A member of the Board of Directors of Synod may not hold any other elective or appointive office, except as otherwise provided by these Bylaws.

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(a) An office shall be regarded as elective only if it is an office filled through election by a national or a district convention, even though a vacancy in such an office may be filled by appointment.

(b) Doubtful cases shall be decided by the President of the Synod.

~~1.5.1.3 Every board or commission member, officer, and all staff of corporate Synod and every agency of the Synod shall be sensitive in their activities to taking or giving offense, giving the appearance of impropriety, causing confusion in the Synod, or creating potential liability.~~

Disclosure of Expectations and Conflicts of Interest

1.5.2 Every board or commission member, officer, and all staff of corporate Synod and every agency of the Synod shall carry out responsibilities and avoid, or properly address, conflicts of interest as described in this bylaw.

(a) ~~Corporate Synod and every~~ Every agency shall implement the synodwide conflict-of-interest policy, and that policy shall be applicable to them and all staff operating under them. This policy shall include the following provisions, the details of which may be elaborated in policy by the Board of Directors of the Synod:

(1) Every board or commission member shall on an annual basis and as the need arises 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 when a relevant situation arises, by a vote of its remaining impartial members whether an inappropriate interest-a conflict exists, and such vote shall be recorded in its official minutes. In the case of officers of the Synod regarding non-board, non-commission work, all such disclosures shall be reported to the President of the Synod to determine whether an inappropriate interest-a conflict exists. In the case of executive staff, the board of the agency, and in the case of other staff, relevant officers or executive staff shall make this determination.

(5) Any conflict so identified shall be managed by the conflicted member abstaining from any vote or decision involving the matter. Should the responsible board, commission, officer, or executive staff determine that information regarding the matter cannot be shared with the member without detriment to the Synod, the member shall be asked to recuse him or herself from discussion of and receipt of documents concerning the matter; failure to recuse him or herself may be inconsistent with (b)(1-2) below.

(6) Potential conflicts of interest required to be disclosed pursuant to this subsection (a) include situations where the individual or the individual's relative or business:

(i) stands to gain a financial benefit from an action the board, commission, agency, or corporate Synod takes or a transaction into which the board, commission, agency, or corporate Synod enters; or

(ii) has a relationship or another interest that impairs, or could be seen to impair, the independence or objectivity of the individual in discharging his or her fiduciary duty to the board, commission, agency, or corporate Synod.

(7) Potential conflicts of interest are not solely financial but may include situations in which the individual or that individual's relative:

(i) serves on the board of, participates in the management of, or is otherwise employed by or volunteers with any third party that the board, commission, agency, or corporate Synod deals with or is considering dealing with, or

(ii) serves on a board, commission, agency, or corporate Synod, or a third party, that is competing with, or may be affected by a decision of, the board, commission, agency, or corporate Synod.

(b) 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.

(1) 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 may constitute a breach of fiduciary responsibility and a cause for removal under Bylaw 1.5.7 or 1.5.8.

(2) Information acquired in the course of carrying out duties of the Synod shall not knowingly be used in any way that would be detrimental to the welfare of the Synod.

(3) No one shall vote on any transaction in which the individual might receive a direct or indirect financial gain.

(4) The Board of Directors shall establish policy regarding the acceptance of gifts, entertainment, or favors from any individual or outside concern which does or is seeking to do business with corporate Synod or the agencies of the Synod.

(c) Every board or commission member, officer, and all staff of corporate Synod and every agency of the Synod shall be sensitive in their activities to taking or giving offense, giving the appearance of impropriety, causing confusion in the Synod, or creating potential liability.

(ed) Individuals, prior to accepting elected, appointed, or staff positions, shall initially and annually thereafter sign statements stating that they have received, understand, and agree to abide by this bylaw and the Synod's conflict-of-interest policy.

To Revise the Membership of the Pastoral Formation Committee

RESOLUTION 9-10A

Overtures 6-64–71, 9-10 (CW, 403–8, 470–71)

WHEREAS, One of the objectives of the Synod is to “recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth” (Const. Art. III 3); and

WHEREAS, The 2013 Resolution 5-14A Task Force (2013 Res. 5-14A, “To Conduct Study of Alternate Routes to Pastoral Ministry,” [Proceedings, 155]) recognized “the need to provide for greater coordination and collaboration between our two seminaries” (Report R64, 2016 Workbook, 279); and

WHEREAS, The task force recommended “that there be an entity ensuring that the seminaries *do* coordinate and collaborate with respect to these various programs” (Report R64, 2016 Workbook, 279); and

WHEREAS, In 2016, the Synod resolved that Bylaw section 3.10 be amended, creating the Pastoral Formation Committee (PFC) (2016 Res. 6-01, “To Create Pastoral Formation Committee,” [Proceedings, 165–6]); and

WHEREAS, The need for coordination and collaboration between our two seminaries has not ceased; and

WHEREAS, Current Bylaw 3.10.4.6 provides that the Chief Mission Officer (CMO) is a member of the PFC. The CMO's responsibilities have been amended by Res. 9-09, “To Amend Bylaws to Coordinate Responsibilities of Chief Mission Officer with Other Synod Officers”; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw section 3.10 be amended as follows:

~~PRESENT~~/PROPOSED WORDING

D. Pastoral Formation Committee

...

3.10.4.6 The Pastoral Formation Committee shall comprise the following five members:

~~Voting Members:~~

1. ~~The Chief Mission Officer of the Synod, chairman~~ An ordained minister who is a parish pastor appointed by the Synod President

2. ~~The presidents of the seminaries~~ A district president (not serving on a seminary Board of Regents), appointed by the Council of Presidents

3. The presidents of the two seminaries (neither shall serve as chair)

4. The executive director of the Office of Pastoral Education, as a non-voting advisory member

~~Nonvoting Advisory Member:~~

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~~The Executive Director of the Office of Pastoral Education~~

3.10.4.7 ~~The executive director of the Office of Pastoral Education shall assist the President of the Synod in overseeing the pre-seminary education programs, seminary education, and post-seminary continuing education.~~

3.10.4.78 The Pastoral Formation Committee shall meet at least once per year, and shall report on its work at the annual joint meeting of the two seminary boards of regents. Additional meetings shall be determined by the chairman in consultation with the committee members.

To Amend Constitution Article XII 15 as to Call of Special District Conventions**RESOLUTION 9-14A**

Overture 9-03 (CW, 451–52)

Rationale

In its periodic review of various district bylaws, the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM, “Removal of a District President from Office,” minutes of April 8–9, 2022) has noted the following:

- Bylaw 1.5.8.1, introduced by 2016 Res. 12-11, “To Establish a Procedure Based on Article XI A 2 for Removal from Office of Officers of the Synod or a District (other than the Synod or a District President)” (2016 *Proc.*, 232–33), provides a procedure for removal of such officers, to the noted exclusion of the Synod or district president.
- District bylaws typically contain provisions for a finding of temporary inability of a district president to serve (generally modeled on Bylaw 3.3.1.4) and sometimes attempt to conceive a procedure, in addition to the inapplicable one in Bylaw 1.5.8.1, to handle the removal of a district president from office for cause. Such a proposal necessarily treads on difficult ground, as the limitations on a board of directors’ authority (its dealing, generally, with legal and property matters, Bylaw 4.5.1, and not extending to supervision of the district president’s ecclesiastical duties) raise questions about whether it would be the appropriate body to act, and on what basis.
- Perhaps the most natural option for a district to remove its president from office, without his being removed first from the roster of the Synod under Bylaw section 2.15, would be by the calling of a special convention to deal with the matter, as (Const. Art. XI A 2) “[t]he 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” (cited in “CCM Opinion re Removal of District Presidents from Office, Ag. 729, minutes of Feb. 21–22, 1975). At the Synod level, a special session of the convention may be called “by three-fourths of the district presidents without the consent of the President” (Const. Art. VIII B 2), but there is no obvious alternative to the district president as “convener” of a special session of a district in Const. Art. XII 15.

The CCM commented, “This presents something of a conundrum on the district level, should a district find that it needs to call its president to account and directly remove him from office *for cause* in a circumstance where removal *from the roster of the Synod* (which would trigger his removal from office) is not called for.”

The CCM referred this matter to the Commission on Handbook (COH) and the two, through the Secretary, initiated discussion of the matter by the Council of Presidents, a discussion that resulted in no proposal. The COH found it incongruous with the provisions of Const. Art. XI A 1–4 that a district president might be able to prevent the body from convening that might call him urgently to give account of his stewardship. There being no other explicit means (other than the President of the Synod invoking the procedure of Bylaw section 2.15 to remove the district president from the roster of the Synod and, thereby, from office) for this to occur, the following constitutional amendment is proposed:

Therefore be it

Resolved, That Constitution Article XII 15 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING**Article XII Districts of the Synod and Their Regulation**

...

15. In cases of urgent necessity a special session of the district president is empowered to convene special sessions of his district; he must, however, previously have obtained consent of at least a majority of the voting members

of the district after having informed them and the President of the Synod of the purpose of the intended special session may be called:

- a. by the district president with the consent of at least a majority of the voting members of the district;
- b. by the circuit forums in three-fourths of the circuits of the district without the consent of the district president; or
- c. by a majority of the vice-presidents and three-fourths of the circuit visitors of the district without the consent of the district president.

All congregations and other members of the district and the President of the Synod must be notified 30 days in advance and told for what purpose this extra meeting is being convened.

and be it further

Resolved, That the above amendment be submitted, according to Const. Art. XV 4, to the congregations of the Synod for ratification.

To Respectfully Decline Overtures

RESOLUTION 9-17A

Overtures 9-17, 23–32, 36–40, 44–45, 48, 52 (*CW*, 475–76, 480–95)

WHEREAS, The floor committee has considered all overtures assigned to it and has concluded, for various reasons, that certain overtures should be declined; therefore be it

Resolved, That the following overtures be respectfully declined for the reasons given:

<u>Overture</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reason</u>
Ov. 9-17	To Initiate Proposal to Realign Districts	The committee disagrees with conclusions of the overture
Ov. 9-23	To Affirm Regional Selection of Board Members	Bylaws 3.3.4.1, 3.8.2.3, and 3.8.3.3 already reflect the intent of the overture; the committee disagrees with conclusions of the overture
Ov. 9-24	To Create Task Force to Develop Overture for Change in Regional Vice-President Selection	All vice-presidents, in line of succession, should be elected by the Synod; the committee disagrees with conclusions of the overture
Ov. 9-25	To Amend Bylaws to Allow Regional Delegates to Select Regional Vice-Presidents	Constitution Article X A 2: Vice-presidents are officers of Synod, not only officers of a region; the committee disagrees with conclusions of the overture
Ov. 9-26	To Develop Overture for Change in Regional Vice-President Selection	Const. Art. X A 2: Vice-presidents are officers of Synod, not only officers of a region; the committee disagrees with conclusions of the overture
Ov. 9-27	To Appoint Task Force to Improve District Representation on Synod Boards, Boards of Regents, and Commissions	Addressed by Bylaw section 3.12
Ov. 9-28	To Amend Bylaw 3.2.4.1 to Limit Terms of Office for President, First Vice-President, Regional Vice-Presidents, and Secretary	To place a limit upon the Synod President that does not apply to his representative District Presidents is a policy inconsistency. Tenure is limited by being up for election each Convention.

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<u>Overture</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reason</u>
Ov. 9-29	To Amend Bylaw 3.2.4.1 to Establish Term Limits for Elected Synod Officers	To place a limit upon the Synod President that does not apply to his representative District Presidents is a policy inconsistency. Tenure is limited by being up for election each Convention.
Ov. 9-30	To Amend Bylaw 3.2.4 to Establish Term Limits for Synod President and Vice-Presidents	To place a limit upon the Synod President that does not apply to his representative District Presidents is a policy inconsistency. Tenure is limited by being up for election each Convention.
Ov. 9-31	To Give Commissioned Ministers the Franchise and To Study Equal Lay and Clergy Representation on Boards and Other Bodies	Addressed by Const. Art. IX and 2023 Res. 9-08A
Ov. 9-32	To Amend Constitution Article XII 10 a to Provide Option of Appointing Ordained or Commissioned Minister as District Convention Rostered Voting Delegate	Addressed by Const. Art. IX and 2023 Res. 9-08A
Ov. 9-36	To Amend Bylaws to Eliminate Ability of Circuit Forum to Submit Overtures	It is important to strengthen circuit forums
Ov. 9-37	To Amend Bylaw 3.1.6.2 to Allow Pastoral Circuit Meetings and Teacher Groups to Submit Overtures	Circuit forums and official district conferences of ordained and/or commissioned ministers can already submit overtures
Ov. 9-38	To Amend the Bylaws to Require Sixty-Percent Affirmative Vote for All Non-Election Matters	Const. Art. VIII C and XIV establish thresholds for passage
Ov. 9-39	To Bring Resolutions with Strong District Support to Convention Floor	Addressed by Bylaw 3.1.6.2
Ov. 9-40	To Create Process for Initiatives and Referenda	Addressed by Bylaw 3.1.6.2
Ov. 9-44	To Amend Bylaw 4.2.2 to Grant Lay Vote to Every Congregation at District Conventions	Addressed by Bylaw 3.1.6.2
Ov. 9-45	To Permit Majority Voting in Electronic Decisions for Synod Boards and Agencies	Overture misstates distinction between voting without a meeting and voting during a meeting held electronically based on Missouri corporate law
Ov. 9-48	To Affirm and Use Biblical Terminology concerning Ministry	Addressed by CCM Op. 25-3053; Op. 25-3053A
Ov. 9-52	To Declare Commission on Constitutional Matters Unconstitutional and Void All Its Opinions	Constitution does not specifically exclude judicial powers

10. ECCLESIASTICAL SUPERVISION AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

To Seek Commission on Theology and Church Relations Opinion regarding Usage of Matthew 18:15–20

RESOLUTION 10-01A

Overtures 10-10, 12 (*CW*, 505–7)

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, being faithful to Scripture, acknowledges, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16); and

WHEREAS, Holy Scripture distinguishes between private sins that are first to be rebuked privately (Matt. 18:15); and public sins that are to be rebuked publicly (1 Tim. 5:20); and

WHEREAS, Bylaw 1.10 and Bylaw 2.14 make multiple references to Matthew 18:15 as support for guiding the dispute resolution process and expulsion of members from the Synod; and

WHEREAS, There is disagreement as to whether Matthew 18:15 must be followed when responding to public sin, as required by Bylaw 2.14 and its subsections, and there are numerous other insightful Scripture passages that could be helpful in providing guidance; and

WHEREAS, Luther's Large Catechism states, "But where the sin is quite public, so that the judge and everybody know about it, you can without any sin shun the offender and let him go his own way, because he has brought himself into disgrace. You may also publicly testify about him. For when a matter is public in the daylight, there can be no slandering or false judging or testifying ... Where the sin is public, the rebuke also must be public, that everyone may learn to guard against it" (LC 1 [Eighth Commandment] 284); and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) released the 2006 report "Public Rebuke of Public Sin"; and

WHEREAS, It is fitting and salutary for the Synod, from time to time, to reexamine its polity and practice in light of Scripture and the Confessions, that we may repent where needed and strengthen what is good; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the CTCR to study Matthew 18:15–20, and other Scripture passages related to public and private sin, with special consideration of the 2006 Report "Public Rebuke of Public Sin"; and be it further

Resolved, That this new CTCR report provide comment specifically as to Matthew 18:15–20 and its relationship or implications, if any, to the practices of maintaining ecclesiastical order and practices of church polity in their historical and contemporary applications; and be it finally

Resolved, That this report be made available to the Synod as a whole prior to the 2029 Synod convention.

The Chief Financial Officer and LCMS Accounting and Financial Services staff, in consultation with the Finance Committee, anticipate no significant incremental costs to the Synod as the activity is understood to be within the existing scope and budget of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (estimate required by Bylaw 3.1.7 [g]).

To Create a Task Force to Clarify Relationship Between Bylaw 1.10 and 2.14 and Consider Bylaw Changes for Dispute Resolution (Bylaw 1.10) and Expulsion of Congregations or Individuals from Membership in the Synod (Bylaw 2.14)

RESOLUTION 10-02A

Overtures 10-06, 08, 12–17, 20–23 (CW, 503–4, 506–13)

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is united in a common confession of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and is called to maintain unity in doctrine and judgment while addressing disputes in a fraternal and timely manner (Matt. 5:23–24; 1 Cor. 1:10). Such reconciliation serves both the Gospel and the well-being of the church; and

WHEREAS, 1 Cor. 1:10 says, "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"; and

WHEREAS, The current dispute resolution process, codified by Bylaw 1.10, was established to resolve disputes within the church while avoiding secular litigation; in practice, the process is sometimes lengthy, complex, and costly and its procedural requirements can cause disputes to take years to address or to remain unresolved; and

WHEREAS, The relationship between Bylaw 1.10 and 2.14 (hereinafter referred to as 1.10/2.14 processes) seems confusing and can benefit from clarification and/or improvements; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the Secretary of Synod (in accordance with Constitution Article XI D 2) and the chair of the Synod Board of Directors to create a task force to study and recommend changes, if needed, to the 1.10/2.14 processes; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force be comprised of seven individuals, appointed with expertise and experience beneficial to the task force's work, to include:

- One district president with experience in the process;
- One ordained rostered church worker with experience in the process;
- One commissioned rostered church worker with experience in the process;
- Four lay persons to include at least one attorney, one trained reconciler who has experience in the process, and two lay persons at large;

and be it further

Resolved, That the task force make recommendations for tools and revisions to clarify the 1.10/2.14 processes, striving to balance making the 1.10/2.14 processes more clear and efficient, timely to complete, less costly, less complex, more transparent, and less cumbersome (e.g., address issues of required face-to-face meetings versus electronic communication), with preserving important procedural and evidentiary due process protections for those involved and benefitting the integrity of the 1.10/2.14 processes; and be it finally

Resolved, That the report be assigned to the proper floor committee for the purpose of adopting resolutions to present at the 2029 Synod convention.

The Chief Financial Officer and LCMS Accounting and Financial Services staff, in consultation with the Finance Committee, estimate an incremental cost of \$90,000–\$120,000 for task force meetings (estimate required by Bylaw 3.1.7 [g]).

To Respond to Sexual Misconduct by Rostered Workers and Make Provision for Spiritual Care of Those Affected

RESOLUTION 10-03A

Overtures 10-27–30 (*CW*, 515–18)

WHEREAS, God establishes the Office of the Holy Ministry for the care of His people (John 20:21–23; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), and those who serve in this office are called to lives that are “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2); and

WHEREAS, Auxiliary offices to the Office of the Holy Ministry have been established by the church and entrusted to fallible men and women who must remain above reproach for the sake of Christ's Church; and

WHEREAS, The Synod, in seeking to be faithful to these vocations, has established a process of ecclesiastical supervision for the oversight and discipline of church workers; and

WHEREAS, The Synod uses the term *sexual misconduct* to describe a range of sinful behaviors reflecting an ungodly life that gives offense to the victims, the congregation or institution, all affected individuals, and the church's witness to the world (cf. “offensive conduct,” Const. Art. XIII 1); and

WHEREAS, There is a need for spiritual care for all involved in an instance of sexual misconduct by a rostered church worker; and

WHEREAS, Due to the shame that comes to victims, congregations or institutions, and all affected individuals because of the sexual misconduct by rostered church workers, the comfort of souls cannot come through the administration of the Law, but through the proper proclamation and distribution of the Gospel through Christ's Church; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the President of the Synod and the Chairman of the Council of Presidents (COP) to appoint a task force to continue the work assigned by 2023 Resolution 10-05A, “To Speak to Spiritual Care of Victims of Sexual Misconduct by Individual Members of the Synod” (*Proc.*, 219); and be it further

Resolved, That the task force shall be comprised of six individuals who in the judgement of the President of the Synod and the Chairman of the COP possess the necessary skills and pertinent experience to bring about a God pleasing result to include three rostered workers (at least one of which must be a commissioned worker) and three lay persons, and at least two members must be women; and be it further

1 *Resolved*, That the task force shall seek the input of outside consultants with expertise in sexual misconduct issues
2 and the testimony of victims of rostered worker sexual misconduct; and be it further

3 *Resolved*, That the task force:

- 4 • may make recommendations for revisions to bylaws, procedures, or manuals;
- 5 • shall contribute to continued refinement of advisory procedures and guidelines, with special attention for proper
6 reporting and transparency, for ecclesiastical supervisors;
- 7 • shall recommend resources to congregations and institutions to address the spiritual needs of the victims of
8 rostered church workers, the accused, the congregation(s) or institution(s), and all affected individuals;
- 9 • shall recommend resources and encourage training of all rostered workers and those preparing for church
10 work vocations in sexual misconduct awareness and prevention;

11 and be it further

12 *Resolved*, That in cases of alleged sexual misconduct, regardless of the roster status of the accused, the district
13 president will assess the spiritual needs and make provision for the spiritual care of the victims, the accused, the
14 congregation(s) or institution(s), and all affected individuals; and be it finally

15 *Resolved*, That the task force report recommendations to the President of the Synod and the COP for inclusion
16 in the reports for the 2029 Synod convention.

17 *The Chief Financial Officer and LCMS Accounting and Financial Services staff, in consultation with the Finance*
18 *Committee, estimate an incremental cost of \$200,000–\$225,000 for 8–10 task force meetings and use of legal*
19 *counsel and other external consultants (estimate required by Bylaw 3.1.7 [g]).*

20 **To Seek Unity and Peace in the Synod and to Establish a Practical Statement** 21 **for God-Pleasing Use of Digital Communications**

22 **RESOLUTION 10-04A**

23 Report R62.6 (*CW*, 232–34); Overtures 4-43–44, 49, 10-04–05 (*CW*, 326–28, 502–3)

24 WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed for the unity of His Church so that the world might believe He has been
25 sent by the Father (John 17:11, 20–23) and declared that all people would know we are his disciples by the love we have
26 for one another (John 13:35); and

27 WHEREAS, The apostle Paul enjoins God’s people to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have
28 been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity
29 of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1–3); and

30 WHEREAS, The first objective listed in Article III of the Synod Constitution is to “conserve and promote the unity
31 of the true faith (Eph. 4:3–6; 1 Cor. 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian
32 church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy”; and

33 WHEREAS, Unity in the Church is a gift from God (Rom. 15:5–6) which we should humbly seek from Him in prayer;
34 and

35 WHEREAS, The Eighth Commandment forbids bearing false witness against our neighbor and commands that we
36 defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way (SC I, Eighth Commandment); and

37 WHEREAS, Luther’s explanation of the Eighth Commandment in the Small and Large Catechisms warns against
38 gossip and slander and calls for appropriate, orderly channels when confronting sin (SC I, Eighth Commandment; LC I
39 [Eighth Commandment]); and

40 WHEREAS, Division and acrimony between Christians compromises the witness of the Church to the world and may
41 impede the proclamation of the Gospel; and

42 WHEREAS, There are individuals and organizations that use social media platforms to publicly disparage the
43 character of others, demonizing and dismissing their humanity; and

44 WHEREAS, The Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), has recognized the dangers that
45 exist when using digital technologies as a means to critique fellow Christians and intervene in our agreed upon processes

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for resolving disputes, especially in *A Snapshot of Trending Tools: Christians and Social Media* (CTCR, adopted Feb. 2019) and *Uses of Online Technology in the Church: Study Materials* (CTCR, adopted Dec. 2024); therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod in convention strongly urge people across the church to pray fervently, both in corporate worship and as individuals, for the unity and health of the Synod, believing that all things are possible with God (Phil. 4:13); and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention encourage all rostered workers and laypeople to commit themselves anew to guarding their tongues and keyboards, that we may “[speak] the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) and avoid harming Christ’s flock through uncharitable or disorderly speech; and be it further

Resolved, That those using pseudonymous accounts for the purpose of sowing discord within Synod be encouraged to repent, delete their accounts, and confess to their pastor or ecclesiastical supervisor to receive absolution; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod call on individuals to “[bear] with one another in love” (Eph. 4:2), by providing forgiveness, by speaking well of each other, by praying for one another, by seeking peace, and by explaining everything in the kindest way; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod encourage its rostered workers, congregations, and laity to avoid using social media to express their disagreements, and for the sake of theological clarity, pastoral care, and a spirit of reconciliation, seek in-person opportunities to engage each other in civil and respectful conversations; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod in convention direct the CTCR, in consultation with the Council of Presidents, to prepare a theological and pastoral statement addressing:

- the Eighth Commandment in the digital age;
- the proper handling of accusations against pastors and congregations;
- the appropriate and inappropriate uses of social media, blogs, podcasts, and similar media in relation to ecclesiastical supervision and discipline;
- the dangers of anonymous or pseudonymous attacks;
- the responsibility of Christians to refrain from sharing unverified accusations;

and be it finally

Resolved, That the CTCR distribute the report to the congregations and professional church workers of the Synod and include this work in its report to the 2029 Synod convention.

To Amend Bylaw 4.2.4 regarding Installation of District Presidents

RESOLUTION 10-05A

President’s Report, Part 2 (*TB*, 1:35)

WHEREAS, The President of Synod or his representative reports to each district convention of the Synod (Bylaw 4.2.4); and

WHEREAS, It is the desirable practice that the elected or re-elected district president be installed before the conclusion of the district convention; therefore be it

Resolved, That Bylaw 4.2.4 be amended as follows:

PRESENT/PROPOSED WORDING

4.2 District Conventions

...

4.2.4 The President of the Synod or his representative shall report on the condition and affairs of the Synod. He shall also deliver the sermon at the opening or convention service. Except in the case of extenuating circumstance(s), he shall also install or reinstall the elected or re-elected district president prior to the conclusion of the district convention in which he is elected. The district president shall assume office upon a date certain in accordance with the bylaws of the district or practices of the district.

NEW DELEGATE RESOLUTIONS

To Set a Deadline for the Council of Presidents to Comply with 2023 Resolution 10-03A

NEW RESOLUTION

Report R60, R62.13 (*CW*, 174, 274)

WHEREAS, 2023 Resolution 10-03A, “To Provide Application of Standards of Accountability to Members of Synod” states:

WHEREAS, The district president has the responsibility of ecclesiastical supervision for his district; and

WHEREAS, There is confusion as to the application of the standards to which the district presidents hold members of the Synod within their duties as ecclesiastical supervisors; and

WHEREAS, There is a perceived lack of transparency with the Council of Presidents (COP) and the members of the Synod they supervise; and

WHEREAS, It is God-pleasing for Christians to foster and grow trust among the fellowship; therefore be it

Resolved, That the COP keep the Synod members of their districts informed of applications of standards to which members could be held accountable; and be it further

Resolved, That those portions of the COP Manual that are not marked “confidential” documents be made available by the COP; and be it further

Resolved, That the COP work to develop consistent application of standards to which members of the Synod are held; and be it finally

Resolved, That the COP work to alleviate confusion and become more transparent by providing a summary of COP meeting notes of relevant information to aid Synod members and foster trust.

and

WHEREAS, The length of time that has elapsed in making these materials available has not fostered and grown trust in the COP nor projected a principal of transparency; and

WHEREAS, The resolution did not specify a timeline for compliance with the resolution nor a method for publicizing that the portions not marked “confidential” materials are available; therefore be it

Resolved, That the COP be commended for providing summaries of COP meeting notes; and be it further

Resolved, That the COP be commended for working to make as much of the COP manual available as possible; and be it further

Resolved, That the COP report on the status of their compliance with 2023 Res. 10-03A, and their plan to come into compliance, in the Synod’s official publications within 60 days of the close of the 2026 Synod convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the COP comply with 2023 Res. 10-03A no later than 180 days after the close of the 2026 Synod convention and publicize that compliance in the Synod’s official publications; and be it finally

Resolved, That the COP consider 2023 Res. 10-03A to have ongoing effect and continually evaluate current and future materials in the COP manual to be made available.

Philip Zielinski
Pastoral Delegate, Ohio District

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PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

5. THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS

To Address the Public Reading of Scripture

AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION 5-09

Resolution 5-09 (*TB*, 1:105–06)

To insert at *TB* 1:105, at the end of the fifth *whereas*, the phrase “while others arguing that such public reading can properly be considered within the Priesthood of all Believers, is not to be considered public teaching, and therefore may properly be carried by lay people, men or women”

To strike out, at *TB* 1:105, line 40, the word “must” and replace it with “should” and the words “one cannot” and replace with “some do not,” so as to make the seventh *whereas* to read:

WHEREAS, It should be acknowledged that some do not clearly dissociate the public reading of Scripture lessons from the distinctive pastoral function of “leading the formal public services of worship”; and

To strike out at *TB* 1:105, lines 48–49, and at *TB* 1:106, lines 1–2, beginning, “... the CTCR in 1985 ...” and insert, at the end of the second *resolved*, the phrase “Synod in convention where they advised that congregations “proceed with care and sensitivity in making decisions permitting the lay reading of Scriptures, recognizing decisions in this regard lie in the area of Christian judgment” (1989 Res. 3-14, “To Address Appropriate Roles for Women and Men in Worship,” *Proc.*, 118)

To insert, at *TB* 1:106, at line 3, the words “and convention resolutions” after “...of the CTCR ...”

To insert at *TB* 1:106, at lines 7–8, the phrase “as well as passages relating to the role of men and women in worship (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:3–18, 14:33b–35),” after “... who should attend to those readings ...”

To insert, at *TB* 1:106, at the end of the sixth *resolved*, the phrase “with recommendation for further actions”

Daniel Fienen
Pastoral Delegate, Michigan District

6. PASTORAL MINISTRY AND SEMINARIES

To Support Residential Master of Divinity and Residential Alternate Route Pastoral Formation for the Sake of the Flock

AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION 6-04A

Resolution 6-04A (*TB*, 3:327–29)

To insert at *TB* 3:329, lines 13–15, the words “certification for the pastoral office in the LCMS through,” so as to make lines 13–15 read:

Resolved, That for the sake of the flock, the Synod in convention reject certification for the pastoral office in the LCMS through online M.Div. and RAR education and commend the seminaries’ commitment to residential M.Div. and RAR education.

Luke D. Elowsky
Pastoral Delegate, New Jersey District

To Support Residential Master of Divinity and Residential Alternate Route Pastoral Formation for the Sake of the Flock

AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION 6-04A

Resolution 6-04 (*TB*, 1:112–14)

To insert, at *TB* 1:114, line 4, the word “fully,” so as to make the *resolved* read:

Resolved, That for the sake of the flock, the Synod in convention reject fully online M.Div. education since it is insufficient for achieving the high standards of the Office of the Holy Ministry.

Jason Moreno
Pastoral Delegate, Texas District

To Affirm and Support Established Parameters of Specific Ministry Pastor Program

AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION 6-06A

Resolution 6-06A (*TB*, 3:331)

To insert, at *TB* 3:331, after line 27 (the second *resolved*), the following two *resolved* statements:

Resolved, That the Synod encourage the seminaries to significantly reduce the cost of the SMP program; and be it further

Resolved, That the seminaries report to the Synod at its next convention what they have determined to do to reduce the cost and why they have made their decision, and provide all relevant financial details behind this decision; and be it further

David Oberdieck
Pastoral Delegate, Missouri District

To Amend Bylaws to Address Seminary Adjunct Faculty

AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION 6-10

Resolution 6-10 (*TB*, 1:118–20)

To insert, at *TB* 1:119, after line 47, the following:

(d) No person who has resigned or been removed from the roster of the Synod, or who has not been a communicant member of a congregation of the Synod or of a church body in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Synod for at least two years, may serve as a faculty member or otherwise teach in any manner for a theological seminary of the Synod.

Mark O. Stern
Lay Delegate, Northern Illinois District

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10. ECCLESIASTICAL SUPERVISION AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

To Seek Unity and Peace in the Synod and to Establish a Practical Statement for God-Pleasing Use of Digital Communications

AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION 10-04

Resolution 10-04 (*TB*, 1:183–84)

To replace, at *TB* 1:183, line 41, the word “disagreements” with the word “conflicts,” so as to read:

Resolved, That the Synod encourage its rostered workers, congregations, and laity to avoid using social media to express their conflicts, and for the sake of theological clarity, pastoral care, and a spirit of reconciliation, seek in-person opportunities to engage each other in civil and respectful conversations; and be it further

Jason Moreno
Pastoral Delegate, Texas District

SLATE OF CANDIDATES

The 69th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (2026)

Office / Candidate	1 st Ballot		2 nd Ballot		3 rd Ballot		4 th Ballot	
First Vice-President of the Synod								
Minister of Religion—Ordained (elect 1, 3-year term)	Total	926						
1. Christopher S. Esget (EN)	7.13%	66						
2. Alfonso O. Espinosa (PSW)	6.95%	157						
3. Eric T. Lange (NOW)	8.32%	77						
4. Peter K. Lange (MO)	60.37%	559						
5. Don R. (Richard) Stuckwisch Jr. (IN)	7.24%	67						
Regional Vice-President								
Central Region								
Minister of Religion—Ordained (elect 1, 3-year term)	Total	936	Total	940				
1. Benjamin T. (Ben) Ball (SI)	47.97%	449	51.91%	488				
2. Joel D. Biermann (MO)	42.95%	402	45.96%	432				
3. Peter J. Brock (IN)	2.99%	28						
4. Jeffrey P. Cloeter (MO)	3.85%	36	2.13%	20				
5. Michael P. Schuermann (CI)	2.24%	21						
East-Southeast Region								
Minister of Religion—Ordained (elect 1, 3-year term)	Total	925						
1. Wally M. Arp (SELC)	13.08%	121						
2. Christopher S. Esget (EN)	56.76%	525						
3. Jeffrey E. Skopak (SE)	10.81%	100						
4. Deric A. Taylor (NJ)	8.86%	82						
5. Luke T. Zimmerman (EN)	10.49%	97						
Great Lakes Region								
Minister of Religion—Ordained (elect 1, 3-year term)	Total	919	Total	931	Total	925		
1. Mark D. Brandt (MI)	22.31%	205	27.93%	260	33.62%	311		
2. Jamison J. Hardy (EN)	15.13%	139						
3. David P. Ramirez (SW)	20.02%	184	23.52%	219				
4. Eric C. Skovgaard (SW)	37.32%	343	48.55%	452	66.38%	614		
5. Sean A. Willman (MI)	5.22%	48						
Great Plains Region								
Minister of Religion—Ordained (elect 1, 3-year term)	Total	921						
1. David C. Mumme (MNS)	12.81%	118						
2. Nabil S. Nour (SD)	51.25%	472						
3. Matthew R. Richard (ND)	15.64%	144						
4. Scott C. Sailer (SD)	9.99%	92						
5. Steven D. Turner (IW)	10.31%	95						

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Office / Candidate	1 st Ballot	2 nd Ballot	3 rd Ballot	4 th Ballot
First Vice-President of the Synod				
West-Southwest Region <i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> <i>(elect 1, 3-year term)</i>	Total 935			
1. Timothy P. (Tim) Ahlman (PSW)	22.99% 215			
2. Alfonso O. Espinosa (PSW)	53.26% 498			
3. Bradley W. Jurischk (TX)	3.64% 34			
4. Eric T. Lange (NOW)	12.09% 113			
5. Yohannes A. Mengsteab (TX)	8.02% 75			
Regional Vice-President Rankings				
2nd Vice-President <i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> <i>(elect 1, 3-year term)</i>	Total 932	Total 932		
1. Benjamin T. (Ben) Ball (SI)	44.74% 417	52.9% 493		
2. Christopher S. Esget (EN)	10.41% 97	7.4% 69		
3. Alfonso O. Espinosa (PSW)	21.35% 199	26.5% 247		
4. Nabil S. Nour (SD)	15.99% 149	13.2% 123		
5. Eric C. Skovgaard (SW)	7.51% 70			
3rd Vice President <i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> <i>(elect 1, 3-year term)</i>	Total 928	Total 929		
2. Christopher S. Esget (EN)	25.11% 233	27.77% 258		
3. Alfonso O. Espinosa (PSW)	43.86% 407	55.97% 520		
4. Nabil S. Nour (SD)	21.98% 204	16.25% 151		
5. Eric C. Skovgaard (SW)	9.05% 84			
4th Vice President <i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> <i>(elect 1, 3-year term)</i>	Total 926	Total 930		
2. Christopher S. Esget (EN)	45.25% 419	53.12% 494		
4. Nabil S. Nour (SD)	41.47% 384	46.88% 436		
5. Eric C. Skovgaard (SW)	13.28% 123			
5th Vice-President and 6th Vice-President <i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> <i>(elect 1, 3-year term)</i>	Total 926			
4. Nabil S. Nour (SD)	66.74% 618			
5. Eric C. Skovgaard (SW)	33.26% 308			
Secretary of the Synod				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> <i>(elect 1, 3-year term)</i>				
1. Richard C. Rudowske Jr. (MO)				
2. John W. Sias (MO)				

Office / Candidate	1 st Ballot	2 nd Ballot	3 rd Ballot	4 th Ballot
LCMS Board of Directors				
Central Region <i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Andrew N. Grams (MDS)				
2. Aaron J. Silletto (IN)				
3. Kevin W. Washburn (MDS)				
West-Southwest Region <i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Trey Cox (PSW)				
2. Jerald L. Folkerts (RM)				
3. Stephen Reavis (TX)				
4. Jesse L. Yow Jr. (CNH)				
At-Large <i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Thomas J. Deadrick (SD)				
2. David C. Eastburn (IE)				
3. John W. Edson (MNS)				
At-Large <i>Minister of Religion—Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Nathan T. Domsch (NEB)				
2. Jay A. Krause (SI)				
3. Jan W. Lohmeyer (SO)				
Board for National Mission				
Central Region <i>Minister of Religion—Ordained or Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Douglas L. Rutt (MO)				
2. Michael P. Schuermann (CI)				
Great Lakes Region <i>Minister of Religion—Ordained or Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Peter C. Bender (SW)				
2. Miriam R. Yakimow (MI)				
West-Southwest Region <i>Minister of Religion—Ordained or Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Kevin W. Austin (PSW)				
2. Thomas E. Chryst (TX)				
3. Neil S. Vanderbush (TX)				
East-Southeast Region <i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Rande T. Casaday (EN)				
2. David L. Daniels (SE)				
3. Karen A. Dowbnia (EN)				
Great Plains Region <i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Vernon W. Kettelhake (NEB)				
2. Sarah Rausch (SD)				

Office / Candidate	1 st Ballot	2 nd Ballot	3 rd Ballot	4 th Ballot
Board for International Mission				
East-Southeast Region <i>Minister of Religion—Ordained or Commissioned</i> <i>(elect 1, 6-year term)</i>				
1. James A. Douthwaite (SELC)				
2. Gregory D. Jans (NJ)				
3. Rachel E. Jaseph (SE)				
Great Plains Region <i>Minister of Religion—Ordained or Commissioned</i> <i>(elect 1, 6-year term)</i>				
1. Richard X. Her (MNS)				
2. Daniel Preus (MNN)				
3. Brent D. Smith (NEB)				
Central Region <i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> <i>(elect 1, 6-year term)</i>				
1. Adam D. Fosse (KS)				
2. Seth R. Hinz (MO)				
Great Lakes Region <i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> <i>(elect 1, 6-year term)</i>				
1. Kelly Bone (MI)				
2. John L. Powers (SW)				
West-Southwest Region <i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> <i>(elect 1, 6-year term)</i>				
1. Richard P. Fielitz Jr. (CNH)				
2. Terence Lung (CNH)				
Commission on Theology and Church Relations				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained (parish pastor)</i> <i>(elect 1, 6-year term)</i>				
1. Andrew C. Kennell (MO)				
2. Martin R. Noland (CNH)				
3. Mark P. Surburg (SI)				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> <i>(elect 1, 6-year term)</i>				
1. Keith G. Chuvala (TX)				
2. Paul P. Edmon (NE)				
Concordia Historical Institute Board of Governors				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> <i>(elect 2, 6-year term)</i>	A B	A B	A B	A B
1. Rodney A. Benkendorf (MO) A B				
2. Mark A. Loest (MI) A B				
3. David P. Ramirez (SW) A B				
4. Robert V. Roethemeyer (IN) A B				
<i>Minister of Religion—Commissioned or Lay</i> <i>Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> <i>(elect 1, 6-year term)</i>				
1. David Duesenberg (MO)				
2. Alessandro Meregaglia (NOW)				
3. Matthew C. Phillips (NEB)				

Office / Candidate	1 st Ballot	2 nd Ballot	3 rd Ballot	4 th Ballot
Concordia Publishing House Board of Directors				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 4, 6-year term)	A B C D	A B C D	A B C D	A B C D
1. Heidi K. Abegg (EN)	A B C D			
2. Jeff Bull (IW)	A B C D			
3. Thomas R. Halvorson (MT)	A B C D			
4. Mark Hemingway (EN)	A B C D			
5. Seth R. Hinz (MO)	A B C D			
6. Noreen L. Linke (RM)	A B C D			
7. Sarah Rausch (SD)	A B C D			
8. William M. Thompson II (MO)	A B C D			
The Lutheran Church Extension Fund—Missouri Synod Board of Directors				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained or Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Michael L. Kumm (SD)				
2. Kevin D. Robson (MO)				
3. Blaise C. Sedney (SE)				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 2, 3-year term)	A B	A B	A B	A B
1. Jason Behr (SW)	A B			
2. Matthew W. Hurtienne (EN)	A B			
3. Julie A. Johnson (SI)	A B			
4. Jonathan H. Kramer (MO)	A B			
5. Gretchen A. Roberts (MDS)	A B			
6. Ryan Weir (KS)	A B			

Office / Candidate	1 st Ballot	2 nd Ballot	3 rd Ballot	4 th Ballot
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation Board of Trustees				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Mark L. Huff (MI)				
2. Todd C. Riordan (IN)				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Glenn R. Pittsford (TX)				
2. Franklin E. Simek Jr. (SI)				
3. Mark O. Swenson (MNS)				
Concordia University System Board of Directors				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Jacob C. Bobby (SD)				
2. Matthew E. Borrasso (SE)				
3. Mark S. Nuckols (SW)				
Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne, Ind.) Board of Regents				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> (elect 2, 6-year term)	A B	A B	A B	A B
1. Randall L. Golter (IE) A B				
2. Timothy M. Klinkenberg (PSW) A B				
3. Korey D. Maas (MI) A B				
4. Jeffrey E. Skopak (SE) A B				
<i>Minister of Religion—Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Matthew C. Janssen (MO)				
2. Mark W. Meehl (NEB)				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Elizabeth R. Killinger (TX)				
2. Michael D. Lange (PSW)				
3. Christian A. Preus (MNS)				
Concordia Seminary (St. Louis, Mo.) Board of Regents				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> (elect 2, 6-year term)	A B	A B	A B	A B
1. Joel A. Brondos (CI) A B				
2. Warren W. Graff (RM) A B				
3. Bruce E. Keseman (SI) A B				
4. Richard C. Rudowske Jr. (MO) A B				
<i>Minister of Religion—Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Sarah E. Gaffney (SI)				
2. Michael S. Staub (TX)				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Michelle M. Kazmierczak (IN)				
2. Noreen L. Linke (RM)				
3. Mark O. Stern (NI)				

Office / Candidate	1 st Ballot	2 nd Ballot	3 rd Ballot	4 th Ballot
Concordia University Chicago (River Forest, Ill.) Board of Regents				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Matthew D. Bean (SE)				
2. Rene G. Castillero (SI)				
3. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. (IN)				
<i>Minister of Religion—Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Jeremy T. Geidel (NEB)				
2. Nathanael Hahn (WY)				
3. Paul R. Steinhaus (NW)				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 2, 3-year term)	A B	A B	A B	A B
1. Alicia K. Dietrich (SI) A B				
2. David Walz (NI) A B				
3. Alison C. Witte (OH) A B				
4. Mark D. Wolfrum (NI) A B				
Concordia University, Irvine (Calif.) Board of Regents				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Brian L. Kachelmeier (TX)				
2. Elroi Reimnitz (PSW)				
3. Muluneh Taye (CNH)				
<i>Minister of Religion—Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Robert S. Fogo (TX)				
2. Sarah E. Gaffney (SI)				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 2, 3-year term)	A B	A B	A B	A B
1. Harry Edmon (NOW) A B				
2. Laura G. Hemminger (NOW) A B				
3. Gary C. Nelson (CNH) A B				
4. Brian T. Yamabe (CNH) A B				

Office / Candidate	1 st Ballot	2 nd Ballot	3 rd Ballot	4 th Ballot
Concordia University, Nebraska (Seward, Neb.) Board of Regents				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Scott T. Adle (NEB)				
2. Luther C. Biggs (NEB)				
3. John David K. Zischke (MDS)				
<i>Minister of Religion—Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Craig A. Ernstmeyer (MO)				
2. Jay A. Krause (SI)				
3. Alan P. Runge (NI)				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 2, 3-year term)	A B	A B	A B	A B
1. Dan Buman (NEB) A B				
2. Christopher P. Heins (MO) A B				
3. Bruce D. Schultz (KS) A B				
4. Douglas Tewes (NEB) A B				
5. Stan Ullerich (IW) A B				
Concordia University, St. Paul (Minn.) Board of Regents				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Jeffrey P. Cloeter (MO)				
2. Adam T. Filipek (ND)				
3. Donald J. Fondow (MNN)				
<i>Minister of Religion—Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. John Chilman III (PSW)				
2. Tia M. Esser (SD)				
3. Gary L. Volberding (MNS)				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 2, 3-year term)	A B	A B	A B	A B
1. Karl Abbott (SE) A B				
2. Paul C. Hinz (TX) A B				
3. Richard A. Rolf (MI) A B				
4. Rosa Summers (MNS) A B				

Office / Candidate	1 st Ballot	2 nd Ballot	3 rd Ballot	4 th Ballot
Concordia University Texas (Austin, Texas) Board of Regents				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Keith W. Schweitzer (IW)				
2. Neil S. Vanderbush (TX)				
3. Richard A. Zeile (MI)				
<i>Minister of Religion—Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Christopher R. Marshall (SW)				
2. Miguel A. Ruiz (TX)				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 2, 3-year term)	A B	A B	A B	A B
1. Jon Allen (EA) A B				
2. William Brandt (TX) A B				
3. Bob L. Ssekyanzi (TX) A B				
Concordia University Wisconsin (Mequon, Wis.) Board of Regents				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Jonathan E. Conner (IW)				
2. Dwayne M. Lueck (NW)				
3. Lance A. ODonnell (SW)				
<i>Minister of Religion—Commissioned</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Jennifer Knox (SW)				
2. Paul R. Steinhaus (NW)				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 2, 3-year term)	A B	A B	A B	A B
1. Jon Allen (EA) A B				
2. Rande T. Casaday (EN) A B				
3. David Lambert (EN) A B				
4. Stephen M. Saunders (SW) A B				
Commission on Worship				
<i>Minister of Religion—Ordained (parish pastor)</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. John M. Berg (SW)				
2. David A. Kind (MNS)				
<i>Minister of Religion—Commissioned (parish teacher)</i> (elect 1, 6-year term)				
1. Matthew C. Janssen (MO)				
2. Miguel A. Ruiz (TX)				
<i>Lay Member of LCMS Member Congregation</i> (elect 1, 3-year term)				
1. Noreen L. Linke (RM)				
2. Joseph L. Olson (SW)				



The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, president of the LCMS, stands with his family during the 69th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in Phoenix on Sunday, July 19, 2026. LCMS Communications/Erik M. Lunsford