

Walking Together – The LCMS Future
Proposals and Possibilities for consideration and Discussion

Presented by
Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance offers the following proposals and possibilities for consideration and discussion. In so doing, the task force desires to be Christ-minded as together we strive to be like-minded, lowly minded, love-minded, and others minded.

The following proposals/possibilities are not final by any means. The task force considers its work to be under construction. With the expectation of ongoing feedback, the Synod's members and leaders are participating as valued and active partners in this work-in-progress.

Why is this not coming from congregations, instead of being initiated by the Synodical hierarchy? Who perceives the need?

In order to advance Christ's mission, it has been the intent of the task force that all the proposals/possibilities be aligned with the Synod's theological principles, such as those discussed in the task force document *Congregation-Synod-Church* (April 2007). (See also the listing of theological principles in another task force document, "Who IS The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod?")

As together we participate in Christ's mission, acting in support of and on behalf of local congregations, we present these proposals/possibilities with the attitude described by St. Paul, who urges "...conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" and "...stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27).

*This presupposes that we have **true** unity in doctrine, teaching and preaching, and not just lip service to the above. We have many who profess this unity but whose deeds do not match their professions.*

Foundational

Aligned with the Synod's theological principles and to advance Christ's mission, these proposals/possibilities amplify, affirm, and clarify that the reason for the Synod's existence under Acts 15 and 1. Corinthians 12 is for congregations to walk together in God's mission and to serve one another for His purpose of saving all people through Jesus Christ. With God's mission as the very ground of our being, these proposals/possibilities affirm and clarify that Christ – His person and justifying work – is the center of our common confession. Our confessional basis remains unchanged (LCMS Constitution, Article II).

While these statements are noble sounding, there is in them much more of a political agenda and an emphasis on some sort of corporate efficiency, as opposed to a unity of congregations working toward one goal.

Congregations and Districts

Relationship between Congregations and Districts: Congregations are the primary mission centers for reaching our communities and the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Faced with ministry challenges in an ever-changing world, congregations are looking for encouragement, support and resources. Since the districts are the closest source of resources to the congregation, the task force has been looking at ways to strengthen the relationship between congregations and districts.

This statement could be read to imply that the “congregation” structure as it was created and exists is, per se, not capable of undertaking this ministry. Was that the intent of the writers? The statement also presupposes that all congregations want a stronger relationship with their district. In one district where I lived, the confessional congregations want no closer relationship with a district president and administrative hierarchy that are antagonistic to them and openly manipulative and coercive.

Congregations are the real foundation of LCMS. If the local congregation is not relying on faithfully preaching and teaching God’s word, then all the resources in the world will not grant increase in their mission. It is God who does the work, not fancily named programs created by districts or the Synod, or by individual congregations in some cases where proper grounding, leadership and teaching may not be present.

There is too much emphasis these days on these grandiose programs and not enough on the Word of God. He proclaims in Is. 55: 10-11: “Then like the rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return thereto, but water the earth and make it fruitful and flourishing, that it gives forth seed, so sow and bread to eat; thus shall the Word that goes forth from my mouth also be. It shall not return to me empty, but do that which pleases me and shall prosper him to whom I send it.”

Brought forward for consideration are the size and functions of the districts for more effective service to congregations. Here are some possibilities for discussion:

- Increase number of districts from 35 to 100 with approximately 60 congregations in each district. This would allow district presidents to become well acquainted with each congregation, its staff, and its leadership, so that they could better support and encourage the mission.

Where is the verifiable analysis and supportable conclusions that some or all districts are too large? Perhaps, it should be required that certain districts receive more attention with regard to proper mission, organization, and communication skills, as well as (for some) a clearer understanding of the role of the congregations?

This proposal appears to be a “political” solution to the need for more effective circuit counselors and creates a potential for increase in administrative overhead and interference. District Presidents are no substitute for effective, confessional teaching and preaching. It is also a mechanism for splitting up “troublesome” districts into fragmented entities more easily controlled by district presidents, who are chosen by Synod.

More districts also presupposes “re-districting” without definition of the proper way to do that. It raises the specter of “gerrymandering” in the wrong hands, increasing politicization and handing the task to some future commission not cognizant of the demographics, history, infrastructural relationships, and needs of the current, let alone future districts.

- These smaller districts could be organized into regions for staffing and for resourcing congregations.

What are regions? How are they identified, organized, structured, staffed and funded? What is their role? This sets up a new “middle management” level with potentially great costs, more personnel, further disconnect from the mission, and another level of bureaucracy/politics to be navigated by congregations seeking to communicate with Synod. Staffing and resourcing are of little use when there is no reliance on the Word of God to create solid growth and increased mission. Where reliance is placed on something else, the results are an illusion, merely the appearance of true growth.

- Decrease the number of districts from 35 to 20 with approximately 300 to 350 congregations in each. These districts would then be large enough to provide staff and resources to support the congregations.

Two widely disparate schemes have been put forward above (perhaps with later analysis as if this is a proper “executive Summary?”), but leading at the least to unnecessary speculation without supporting facts or context. These proposals beg the question: what is wrong with the present structure? District restructuring of any sort reposes far too much trust in Synod: There has already been evidence of a willingness to “cook the books” to achieve the aims of some in the Synodical administration. Creating super-districts again offers a means of splitting up “troublesome” districts in order to silence dissent arising from the “incorporation” of LCMS.

- Keep the district structure as is, but encourage districts to collaborate with neighboring districts and to organize their staffs and resources for the mutual strengthening of their congregations’ mission.

Now, “three” schemes have been put forward without analysis. Is the task force so divided, or is the intent to cast doubt and place weight against the current organization, or is this still an executive summary without details to discuss? Executive summaries are, typically, written last! Again, we see a “corporate” response as opposed to encouraging the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word, confessional integrity and reliance on God, not men to give the increase.

- Instill flexibility so that congregations and groups of districts could reorganize as they feel best meets their missional needs.

This proposal leads to organizational chaos. What are the rules and who makes of later enforces them? What, if any, is the doctrinal, geographical, or demographic rationale? The task force would best demonstrate where such a scheme has worked for any other large-

scale, multi-unit organization, ever! If they cannot so demonstrate, such a “straw dog” should not be in the report!

Also lacking is a definition of a missional need: is it different from faithful and confessional preaching and teaching of the Word of God? Is the missional need merely to put more people in the pews, regardless of how it is done?

The task force has focused considerable attention on the role of electoral circuits, visitation circuits, and circuit counselors. In most cases, the concept of the visitation circuit and electoral circuit has become synonymous. In order to empower circuits so that they can be seen as places where pastors and congregations are supported, encouraged, and resourced through the interaction of lay and professional leadership, the task force discussions have included the following:

Where is the appendix or link to the evidence and fruits of that “considerable attention.” On what basis was attention focused? Who set the rules of analysis and why? Where is the statement on the organizational purpose, working definition, and limitations of authority and responsibility of circuits, as intended and currently extant?

Circuits should not exist as another administrative layer placed on top of the congregation. It is an indication of just how “management” oriented so many of Synod’s actions have become. Creating yet another layer of bureaucracy, no matter how positively described, leads to further removal of power from the local congregation and a move toward a structure more like that of ELCA.

- Restore visitation circuits to their primary purpose, which means omitting the action of electing convention delegates (eliminating “electoral” circuits).

When and why were “electoral” circuits created? Do they always coincide with visitation circuits? What problems exist with the existence of both visitation and electoral circuits. Is there a necessity for elimination of the “electoral” circuit?

- Since circuit counselors assist and are representatives of the district presidents, involve the district president in the selection of circuit counselors.

When and how did circuit counselors become functionaries of the district presidents? Circuit counselors may be representatives of the district president in the view of the BRTFSSG, but do they not in fact also represent the congregations in that circuit? It seems that this simply gives more power to the district president at the expense of the individual congregations in the circuit. This is more of the centralizing tendency seen in current proposals for “rejuvenation” of LCMS.

- Allow flexibility in providing access of pastors one to another. For example, circuits could be formed geographically, by affinity group, by size of congregation, or by any other method deemed most appropriate by the congregations of the district.

What is wrong with geographical groupings and how is it related to the aggregate number of congregations? Larger congregations tend to have larger internal resources and may be no more of a “demand” on upper level resources than smaller ones. Again, a scheme other than geographical and/or, perhaps, size based will lead to politicization, personalities and arbitrariness. Insider deals will define and change circuits. No definition is offered for an affinity group. What is an affinity group? Do not our pastors already have considerable access to one another? How would this impact electoral circuits?

Congregations and the National Synod

Relationship between Congregations and the National Synod: With congregations as the primary mission centers, the key issue becomes how the national Synod can best serve congregations so as to enhance their mission and do for us all what we cannot do – or do as well – by ourselves.

This statement announces a “done deal” of redefinition, rapidly moving to replace “congregation” with “mission center.”, allowing a total redefinition of the purpose for, organization of, authority, and responsibilities of congregations. Is this the intent and, if so, to what purpose?

The last thing congregations need is some expensive and doctrinally questionable “help” from Synod. As stated before, the effective agent in mission is the Word of God (Is. 55, 10-11). Programs such as “Ablaze” do nothing to advance true missionary work because they rely on the works of men to do what only God can accomplish – win souls to Christ. We can and should be workers in the harvest, but the Lord of the Harvest directs and guides our efforts in accordance with His Will and His Word.

So that we might be faithful to our mission and be good stewards of the resources God has given us, the task force has discussed a variety of possibilities, including the following:

This wording could be taken to imply that “we” (congregations and members) are not, in general, now faithful to our mission and good stewards, as well as at the circuit and district levels. Was this the, unfortunate, intent of the task force? How was this lack of faithfulness and good stewardship determined?

- Determine which boards and commissions should be retained at the national level and which would more effectively resource *(there is no such word)* congregations if located at the district level. Deploy staff and resources accordingly.

Where is the consideration to determine which boards and commissions should not be retained at ANY level, but should be disbanded altogether or have their intended mission reassigned to other units?

- Within such a restructuring, appoint task forces as necessary for such projects and initiatives as the National LCMS Youth Gathering, hymnal projects, transformation of

congregations, urban ministry, and the like. Some national staff may be needed to accomplish these tasks, but not at an executive level.

Task forces typically report to a higher level for administrative/budget/product guidance purposes. Oversight and accountability are necessary! Such accountability seems to be completely lacking in this case. Lack of proper oversight is rampant in LCMS in all too many cases. As an example; by all accounts, the LCMS National Youth Gathering and some District Youth Gatherings (Texas District, for one) are theological disasters, with heterodox personalities and questionable doctrinal teaching allowed. It should either be brought under strict, doctrinal control or abolished.

As to “transformation of congregations” it would be good to know what is meant by this item. How congregations operate is their responsibility, unless they fall into theological or doctrinal error.

- Regarding executive staff at the national level, follow the lead of our districts and allow for a minimal number of executives who report directly to the president of Synod, with advisory boards to encourage and support the ministry. (Currently, all district executive staff report directly to and are evaluated by their respective district presidents.)

Is there a potential for too much concentration of power, without any balance residing in an advisory board? The task force needs to demonstrate its understanding of and ability to identify the difference between “administrative report”, for the purpose of work coordination, and “legislative report”, for hiring and firing, definition of duties, determination of effectiveness, and consideration of out for adoption or not.

- Standardize terms of office for all elected officials. (Currently some officials are elected to three-year terms and some to six-year terms.)

This is a bad idea, as it may result in wholesale turnover without retention of institutional memory in some very important areas. A system of transition can be effected to assure retention of institutional memory and proper overlap of terms. However, there also exists a potential for “political” manipulation of terms.

Congregations, Membership, and Conventions

Membership: In order to advance Christ’s mission, the task force proposals/possibilities clarify who we are by underscoring the essentially congregational character of Synod, the role of the ordained and commissioned members, and the participation of the laity in the life and work of the Synod.

- The task force brings forward for consideration and discussion as one such proposal that the commissioned ministers of the Synod be eligible to be chosen as voting delegates to the conventions of the Synod and districts. While the pastoral office is by divine right or arrangement (*de jure divino*), the ministers of religion-commissioned are recognized as

associate members of the Synod to be in a service position by human right or arrangement (de jure humano) but certainly eligible to serve as a congregation's non-ordained delegate (as is the laity). (See Article V and Bylaws 1.2.1 (k): 1.3: 2.1ff.)

The ministers of religion- commissioned are still members of the laity in that they are not ordained: no third class of delegate, which is neither fish nor fowl is needed. This proposal would heavily sway legislative power away from congregations and laity, since "commissioned ministers" are under the authority of and beholding to ordained ministers/officers.

Congregations, District Conventions, and Representation: For purposes of representation, the task force brings forward the following for consideration and discussion:

- Establish at least two voting representatives – one who is the called pastor and the other who is a non-ordained person – for each congregation

It would seem that it would be best for the non-ordained representative to be a lay person and not a minister of religion-commissioned.

- Ensure that each congregation in a multi-parish is represented by its pastor and one non-ordained person.

What is the definition of a multi-parish: is it one that is served by a pastor who has at least one other congregation? The "one pastor" serving several congregations should only have one vote!

- Ensure that vacant congregations are represented by the vacancy or interim pastor and one non-ordained person.
- Allow congregations with more than 750 confirmed members to be represented by two additional delegates for each additional unit of 750 confirmed members or majority thereof, with each pair of additional delegates to be one ministerial (ordained or commissioned delegate and one non-ordained delegate.

The report needs to include the rationale for the increments of 750 confirmed members. Here the task force seems to consider commissioned persons as ministers, as opposed to non-ordained, where in the first point for discussion they group them with the non-ordained, ie. laity. How can they exist in two different states?

In addition, this proposal gives greatly increased power to mega-congregations and therefore guarantees a loss of voice for smaller congregations. Short of a bicameral delegate structure, this is a recipe for rule by sheer mass or numbers. Some mega-congregations have proven to be the least inclined to adhere to confessional standards and practices of LCMS in the past, while others are most resistant to hubristic progressivism. Where is the demonstrated need for this proposal?

Congregations, National Conventions, and Representation: For purposes of representation, the task force brings forward the following for consideration and discussion:

- Determine whether a reduced number of voting delegates – wither 625 or 850 – would provide more effective representation.

Why would a reduced number of voting delegates provide more effective representation? Who is going to be affected by this reduction? Combined with the suggestion that mega-congregations be awarded more voting members and the extremely unfortunate concept of “commissioned ministers as delegates”, this proposal is an essential disenfranchisement of smaller congregations.

- Determine each district’s number of delegates according to that district’s exact percentage of the total number of congregations and communicants in Synod.

Again, this encourages rule by sheer mass. It is a sad commentary, perhaps, but nonetheless true, that the largest districts are often the ones who are the least in conformity with the official doctrines and positions of LCMS. In addition, this is another form of disenfranchisement of smaller districts by the larger. If delegates are chosen on the basis of individual congregations and/or reasonably proportionate circuits, there is no need to further complicate matters with a “district” wild card. Congregational polity must remain at the root of the system design!

- Elect national convention delegates at district conventions (where all congregations are represented) from a list of congregational delegates to the district convention that immediately precedes the national convention. Allow each district to determine how these candidates would be selected and elected, involving all congregations within the district and based upon criteria established by the national Synod.

How would such criteria be developed and adopted? If “national”, then only an illusion of “allow each district to determine” would exist. Further, it dilutes the representation of congregations, eliminates representation of circuits, and leaves Walther in the dust.

This proposal gives the majority of ordained delegates the ability to block out delegates from circuits and/or congregations when voting blocs exist based upon personalities, doctrine, demographics and geography within the district. It is a horrible idea!

Why is the term national Synod used repeatedly? Are there smaller synods within Synod? Is there an intent to switch to the ELCA type of structures, where “districts” become “Synods” – the regional unit? Why?

- Whatever the system of election, maintain an equal number of ordained and non-ordained voting delegates.

Have recent conventions had an imbalance of significance between the numbers of ordained and non-ordained delegates? How is this harmful and why does it need correction?

Comment by Randy Bosch: The Pittsburgh Convention that I attended as an elected lay delegate was about as equal as could occur. The offset was probably district presidents and other Synod and district hierarchy allowed as voting delegates by dint of office. Has something changed since then? Currently, is there really an equal number of ordained and non-ordained? If so, why, and how did the change occur?

- Discontinue the practice of designating advisory delegates and reduce the number of advisory representatives.

Where is evidence that the current system is harmful or dysfunctional? How can teachers, deacons, DCEs et .al., be represented if not advisory? Simply through their ordained and lay delegates!

- Allow in subsequent conventions for the fluctuation in the number of delegates from each district based upon the most recent percentage of congregations/communicants.

Again, this is moving toward a strictly proportional representation. See remarks above in this section.

Note that as aligned with the theological principle of Christian stewardship (stewardship of resources), the Synod's mission and ministry would benefit from a savings of nearly \$1 million in national convention expenses by reducing the number of voting delegates to 625, eliminating advisory delegates, and reducing the number of advisory representatives.

The practical effect of such "economy" may well be turning the convention into a rubber stamp and spending the "savings" on worthless programs such as Ablaze. A better solution would be to keep the voting delegates in a 50/50 ordained/lay ratio and eliminate the "advisory" delegates.

Frequency, Function, and Overtures: For purposes of the frequency and function of the conventions, the task force brings forward the following for consideration and discussion:

- Hold a national convention every three years, alternating between a *focused* convention and a *general* convention in years three and six.

Who determined what is to be the subject(s) of the "focused" conventions? If this is done by Synod, then it severely reduces the voice of districts and congregations in addressing serious problems in Synod. It also means that subjects of great importance may only be addressed every three years, giving them an additional time to fester and cause dissention, leaving fewer opportunities to confront heterodox or harmful situations.

The Wyoming Legislature, for an example of dysfunctionality, has such a system in its annual sessions, budget one year and legislation the other year. The disconnect due to such a bifurcated focus has, in the opinion of many, including a number of wise elected representatives, resulted in a great waste of resources and time, and a disconnect as representatives change. It would be far better to keep conventions every three years and do the business required of a “national” Synod. Everything else would go to the district conventions with an offset schedule.

- Hold district conventions every three years, alternating between a *focused* district convention and a *general* district convention.

The same remarks apply here, as above.

- Features of a general convention:
 - Regular business and reports
 - Six-year, staggered terms of office, including officers
 - The Divine Call of the president, vice-presidents, and secretary, and the election of the vice president – finance/treasurer
Where is the Scriptural justification for this? There is a Divine Call to office of the ordained ministry, but I do not find a basis for extending this to Synodical officers.
 - Overtures (see below)
 - Agenda determined according to current provisions
The current provisions seem designed to put a strangle hold on resolutions and overtures that are not approved by the Synodical hierarchy.
 - Communication with delegates in the interim via secure electronic communication technology.
Currently, there exists no procedure to respond to great opportunities or calamities. The task force idea here would create an ongoing (three year term) period of active representation for delegates, rather than one related strictly to conventions – in effect full time delegates. This would require funding and grant authority, power, supervision and control of communications, et.al. during that period. This is a substantial change from the historic polity of the LCMS, and would lead to yet another structure that has not been explicated in the task force report. Without elaboration, this cannot even be considered on the list of possible futures.

The “run-ups” to past conventions have seen an increase in “political” communications by special interest groups and candidates that now rival some public campaigns. This is not good! On the other hand, where would “transparency” be with the suggested system?

- Features of a focused convention:
 - Focus on theology, contemporary issues, common confession and mission, nurture, inspiration, and celebration
The underlined words appear to be buzz words – what is the definition of each? Do we not already have a common confession and mission? What appears to be hidden here is an agenda for watering down of theology and worship practices. Before we

buy into any of these, there needs to be a detailed, Scripturally and doctrinally based definition of the purpose of each.

The entire list looks like agenda matters for various conferences, whether national, regional, or district, rather than “convention” issues. This proposal begins to look like the normal nature of “professional society” conventions – a little business, a lot of “conventioneering”. What an opportunity for good works to abound!

- Limited business and reports

This is a slippery slope! Who defines “limited”?

- Overtures (see below)

A similarly slippery slope.

- Six year staggered terms of office, including officers
- Agenda to be determined by the president in consultation with officers of the Synod and the Council of Presidents

This appears to be intended to muzzle congregations and something that is frequent with agenda preparation for any organization when in the hands of “them”! This is not going to relieve strong feelings of disenfranchisement.

- Communication with the delegates in the interim via secure electronic communication technology

This does not rise to the level of a reorganization concepts discussion. Exactly what needs to be communicated via “secure electronic communications technology” that could not be handled by means prevalent over the past 2000 years? There is no current need for “delegates to respond to great opportunities or calamities within the scope of their office, not could any be anticipated. Some of these items seem to presuppose ongoing (3 year) term work for delegates rather than strictly related to conventions, i.e. full time delegates. This is not a good idea. Why is there a need for such skullduggery?

For purposes of overtures to the conventions, the task force brings forward the following for consideration and discussion:

- Eligibility for the submission of overtures according to the current provisions with the addition of the officers of the Synod in relation to their responsibility for a national convention

Why is this either necessary or beneficial? It is analogous to allowing the executive Branch of the federal government to introduce legislation directly into Congress and Represents an erosion of the legislative prerogatives of the Convention.

- Eligibility for the submission of overtures according to the current provisions with the addition of the officers of the district in relation to their responsibility for a district convention.

The same objections remain here, as in the proposal above. It abrogates the function of the district convention by allowing district officers to directly introduce legislation, with the same erosion of prerogatives as outlined above.

- For the sake of effective leadership and for a broad, generative influence (persuasion), as well as broad participation and in-depth study, the individual member congregation is strongly encouraged to channel its overture(s) to the district convention (which is the assembled congregations of a district) through a circuit forum

This adds yet another layer to the process and represents a further check on the ability of a congregation to directly voice its concerns by creating another administrative hurdle to surmount. When organizations cite the need for “effective leadership” it is often a signal that the administrative apparatus wants more control of the legislative process. It is typically an attribute of a closely-held corporation, not a Lutheran church. What is a “broad, generative influence?”

- For the sake of effective leadership and for broad and generative influence, as well as broad participation and in-depth study, the individual member congregation is strongly encouraged to channel its overture(s) to the national general convention through the district convention.

The “officers of the district are responsible for carrying the overtures approved by the district convention to the Synod, not for having an alternate agenda. If they cannot support the overtures adopted by “their” district convention, they should not be officers of that organization. “A house divided against itself cannot stand” comes to mind here.

The statement is that “effective leadership” does not currently exist. What is the basis for that judgment? This concept sets up a “veto” of the petitions brought forward by a congregation by an unknown and all powerful censorship bureau. The concept hides the same restrictive proposal under the guise of supposedly positive attributes, perhaps with an eye to weakening congregational polity by attributing to that polity unstated negative effects.

- Overtures to a district convention from individual member congregations that have been channeled through a circuit forum will receive priority consideration at the district convention.

This may well be calculated as a “gag” to confessional congregations in a circuit that is more liberal. Its result is a disenfranchisement of the individual congregation by administrative procedure and preference. It represents yet another hurdle that a concerned congregation must surmount.

- Overtures to a national convention from individual congregations that have been channeled through a district convention and any other overtures from a district convention will receive priority consideration at the national convention.

See remarks above. In both proposals, process trumps doctrine. “Points” are given for jumping through hoops, not for the worthiness for discussion of proposals.

Doctrinal Resolutions and Statements: The current Bylaws provide excellent summary statements of the Synod’s confession of faith, doctrinal resolutions and statements, and a dissent process.

How many erring district presidents and pastors are reprovved for violating the summary statements? When are we to start confessing the Bylaws instead of The Word, The Creed, the Lutheran Confessions?

The task force brings the following forward for discussion:

- Doctrinal resolutions of special significance (such as those initiating, modifying, or repealing specific positions or practices of the Synod) require a two-thirds vote for adoption.

How does this differ from current requirements?

- All adopted doctrinal resolutions are to be honored and upheld by the members of Synod in accordance with each resolution's intended status until such time as the Synod amends or repeals them.

So, if a national convention adopts a doctrinal resolution that is directly contrary to the historical, doctrinal standards of LCMS, then all members, clergy and congregations, must obey. How would they be amended or repealed, by the same process? Theological and doctrinal truth, founded on Holy Scripture are not subject to some political process. No vote was taken when God spoke the Word, nor was there a resolution when Dr. Luther framed the Ninety-five Theses, or the Augsburg Confession written.

There is only one elector eligible to vote in these matters; God. He has spoken. It is not unusual for "organizations" to expect their members to fully adhere to the adopted purpose, goals and objectives, rules and regulations until such time as they are amended. Why the need for an additional emphasis?

- Doctrinal statements (formal statements of belief) submitted by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to the Synod in convention for further consideration and possible adoption require a two-thirds vote for adoption.

Doctrinal statements are tremendously important. Should they be decided in one convention? Should not the process of considering submissions by anyone or any body be very carefully set out and not necessarily limited to consideration by one assembled body? Where is a process similar to that which the task force set forth for overtures coming "up" from congregations, at the very least?

- Clarification of Constitution Article VIII to provide for above.

Where is this proposed clarification and from whence does it emanate?

The task force proposal clarified and affirms that the Synod expects every member congregation on the Synod to respect its resolutions and to consider them of binding force on the assumption that they are in accordance with the Word of God and that they are applicable to the condition of the congregation.

There are numerous congregations that have disregarded resolutions regarding close communion with impunity. Unionistic practices are ignored, as well. This raises the serious question of selective enforcement and tacit acceptance of practices

rejected by various conventions. This is also an iron fist in that when President Kieschnick's forces rule the roost no dissent will be tolerated. Assuming that resolutions are in accordance with the pure Word of God is a leap of faith that is more and more difficult to make, given the sorry record of CTCR and the unwillingness of Synod to signally discipline those who have violated existing resolutions. Are we to blindly obey resolutions that are contrary to the clear Word of God; are our consciences now prisoner to convention politics?

Other: For purposes of clarity, the taskforce brings forward for consideration and discussion the following addition to the constitution [There is no such current provision. Cf. bylaw chapter 7, "Amendments to Bylaws" (2007 *Handbook*, page 201) and Articles of Incorporation, Article VII, "Bylaws" (2007 *Handbook*), page 204.]:

- The Synod in convention may adopt Bylaws that are consistent with and do not contradict the Constitution of the Synod, which controls and supercedes the Bylaws and all other rules or regulations of the Synod. Bylaws, which may be adopted, revised, or eliminated by a simple majority vote of a Synod convention, are binding regulations for the Synod and its conduct and governance.

Determination of consistency and possible contradiction are vested with what body? Are the Constitution and Bylaws of Synod, after all these years, so poorly constructed that such an amendment is necessary? Please set forth the basis for this (and all other) recommendations.

Items for further Attention

In addition to the proposals/possibilities presented above, the task force has discussed many other items. However, they require additional time and extensive research. *Why not wait and present this all at one time?* That said, the task force is very interested in what the people of LCMS have to say concerning the following issues:

- Expanding responsibility for the certification of pastoral candidates to include district presidents and congregations being served by such candidates

This is a very bad idea, as it injects the distinct prospect of "political" or other agendas being injected into a process now vested in the Seminaries, which are far more qualified to judge the fitness of candidates for certification. This dilutes the control over education and preparation rightly vested in the Seminary faculties.

- Changing the name of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod to better reflect who we are today, a church body that serves throughout North America and I partnership with 30 other Lutheran church bodies around the world.
This is another idea born from a wish to distance our Synod from its historical and doctrinal roots. If you are ashamed of your historical roots, then you are ashamed of who you are now. This idea stems from a desire to become "more accepted" by the

world” by abandoning any trace of the name that has stood for our pure Lutheran doctrine and theology since our foundation. It is a marketing ploy and nothing more.

Consider how such a scheme has worked for other organizations – it hasn’t. Most “Lutheran” bodies have changed their names to distance themselves from their roots, and have ended up being “Lutheran in name only – LINO”.

- Electing Synod vice presidents by region, thus enabling each region to be represented within the Praesidium

This looks like another mechanism for a power grab. Please explain exactly how “regions” (however defined) are a proper basis for representation in God’s Kingdom? What did the Apostle Paul say about “neither Greek nor Jew”? What did Christ say?

- Election of the Synod’s Board of Directors by region so that each region is represented

Has there been any demonstrated problem with the current practice? Please explain how one’s physical address is a determinant of faith, knowledge or wisdom?

- Amplifying, confirming, and clarifying the mission and purpose of the Synod (Article III).

Why is no language to this end submitted for consideration? What is wrong with the current state of Article III? How, after all these years, is the mission and purpose now in need of such amplification, confirmation and clarification? How does the message of the Gospel need confirmation or clarification? Please explain, with proper exegetical back-up.

Clarifying the meaning of membership in Synod, including the historic advisory relationship of the Synod to its members (Articles VI and VII).

Again, where is the language of this proposed clarification? What is needed, and why is the present meaning considered unsatisfactory, and by whom?

Based on feedback received, the task force will determine whether or not to continue study on these issues. In the meantime, they inform the church of the topics the task force is wrestling with and the topics for which the task force seeks the comments of the church.

The dissemination of this paper has been quite limited, as far as I can determine. Why is not this printed up and sent out to each member congregation? Failure to do so smacks of keeping this “process” somewhat obscured and out of the view of the great majority of members of our congregations.

This paper only approaches what one might expect to receive in a pre-discussion outline of an executive summary. When, how and where will the background, discussions, Scriptural and doctrinal bases of these concepts and discussions be

provided? There is nothing here on which to even begin a useful discussion. Why should everyone be forced to conjecture about the “information” available to, analysis provided to, and discussion within the task force on such an important matter?

For those experienced in the necessary periodic and ongoing evaluation of an organization, and the methods for renaissance where necessary, the state of this paper would indicate several years and rounds of discussion are necessary before placing anything on the agenda for any consideration would be wise. Is that the intent?

The incomplete nature and broadly generalized of the proposals indicated a haste in preparation and presentation that is neither seemly nor judicious. There appears to be a rush to judgment on the basis of information to which we are not privy, as well as a broad and remarkably non-specific condemnation of the current polity of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. What is the real intent of the task force?