**Minutes: Board of Directors Meeting – Approval by the Board**

Minnesota South (MNS) District

December 12, 2023 – 9:00am to 3:00pm

District Office, Burnsville, MN

# Mission Statement

Cultivating leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God.

**1. OPENING DEVOTION**

Rev. Kurt Klaus, Senior Pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church in Lakeville served as the chaplain for the day. He led a devotion using LSB “Service of Prayer and Preaching.” His message highlighted how God works powerfully through people who faithfully work behind the scenes and serve diligently in the background. We sang LSB Hymn 720 “We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight.”

**2. PARLIAMENTARY OBLIGATIONS**

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the President, Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, at 9:16 am.

1. Roll Call

Present: Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford; Rev. David Mumme; Rev. Thomas Evans; Rev. Keith Grimm; Mr. Rick Marko; Rev. Kurt Klaus; Mr. Daniel Thao; Ms. Alfrieda Baldwin; Rev. Matthew Johnson; Mr. Travis Barclay; Rev. Jonathan Vollrath; Ms. Sara Sorenson; Rev. Eric Nelson; Mr. David Koosman; Mr. Daniel Uttech; Mr. Andy Frerich; Mr. Joel Landskroener

Staff: Rev. Stefan Wismar; Mr. Sean Martens; Dr. Phillip Johnson; Rev. Vue Lee; Mr. Kai Larson; Rev. Fred Hinz; Ms. Nadine Meyer

Excused: Rev. David Kind; Rev. Mark Loder; Mr. Bill Summers; Mr. Dave Kenow

1. Approval of Agenda

The motion carried for the agenda of the day to be approved.

1. Approval of Minutes of Past Meeting (*prepared by Keith Grimm, Secretary*)

A motion was made and seconded to approve BOD minutes from May 2, 2023, and September 25-26, 2023. The motion carried.

1. Correspondence

Rev. Keith Grimm, District Secretary, highlighted that LCMS Secretary John Sias is looking for nominations for one ordained and four lay persons to serve on the Concordia Plans Service Boards. LCMS bylaws require that at least five of the twelve laypersons be experienced in the design of benefit plans; five must be experienced in the management of benefit plan investments; and one must have significant financial/audit experience. For this upcoming term they are especially looking for candidates who have experience managing benefit plan investments. The deadline for receiving nominations is Friday, March 1, 2024.

1. BOD Meeting Schedule.
2. February 17, 2024
3. May 7, 2024
4. September 16-17, 2024
5. December 10, 2024
6. February, 15, 2025
7. May 6, 2025
8. June 2025 – District Convention

**3. GUEST PRESENTER**

Minnesota South District LWML President, Mrs. Lisa Kamrath, reported on LWML involvement. There are 153 LWML groups and 20 zones in our District. In addition, there are 40 LWML Districts nationally. Lisa also shared the LWML mission statement, strategic plan, and multiple Bible study and devotional resources. Over $100 has been sent to mission projects throughout the world throughout the history of the LWML. Finally, the next MN South District LWML Convention will be in Mankato June 20-22, 2024. The next LWML Convention takes place in Omaha, Nebraska, June 26-29, 2025. 

**4. VISIONING / STUDY ITEMS / PRESENTATIONS**

Josh Wagner, Business Manager for the MN South District, gave us a Microsoft Teams presentation. This i.t. training was intended to sharpen our knowledge and available tools.

**5. POLICY FORMATION**

1. Governance Change Review

Dr. Phil Johnson, Assistant to the President - Mission Formation, shared proposed changes to the 2022 MNS District Handbook. There will be minor changes to Article 3 of the District Constitution and significant changes to the District By-laws. Next, Phil shared the proposed timeline for implementing the proposed changes to the 2022 MNS District Handbook. Several reasons were provided why these changes are necessary and will be beneficial. The new structure mirrors that of our Synod’s structure. At this point, Phil highlighted change areas of most significant impact.

1. Governance Change Communication Plan

Dr. Phil Johnson, Assistant to the President - Mission Formation, encouraged the Board members to be fully present in future discussions; to ask for clarification when necessary; and to participate in your regional training events. Our support and unity of BOD actions in public discourse and private discussions is crucial.

**6. REPORTS**

1. President’s Report Highlights, Q & A: Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford

Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford presented his report of activities from September through December 2023. He is making regular check-in calls with as many pastors as possible each month. He opened himself to the BOD for questions.

Rev. Stefan Wismar, Executive Assistant to the President, mentioned he is working with several calling congregations and working with congregations that are declining in membership.

Rev. Vue Lee, Minnesota South Missions Executive, reported he is visiting as many churches possible throughout the District. He is encouraging our mission congregations to form collaborative relationships with nearby churches and leaders. He also is encouraging church plants within the District.

Dr. Phil Johnson, Assistant to the President - Mission Formation, highlighted the *Go First!* Ministry Conference at Concordia Academy in Roseville April 19-20, 2024. In addition, Phil is working with congregations who are looking to add commissioned workers. Finally, he is working with churches to look at collaborative partnerships with other congregations.

Mr. Sean Martens, Assistant to the President, Education & Commissioned Ministers, mentioned he is working with the accreditation process for Lutheran Schools. The educator shortage is a major concern. Our Lutheran teachers as a whole are satisfied with what they do. The key is teacher retention and leadership turnover. The number of commissioned ministers from all Concordia Universities, who are eligible to receive their first call, is 115 (68 of these are teachers), which is down from previous years. One area that can address this problem is sharpening our colloquy process.

Rev. Fred Hinz, the District’s Public Policy Advocate, has served in this capacity for ten years. The good news is that people and congregations are more willing to engage in discussions and action because of the radical cultural and spiritual costs that are at stake.

Ms. Nadine Meyer, Communications Director for the District, mentioned she is working on publicizing the *Go First!* Ministry Conference and continually updating the District’s website. She continually is looking for stories and events to emphasize throughout the District.

Joshua Wagner, Business Manager for the MN South District, updated his transition into his new role. He has connected with leaders in similar positions in other districts to gain new knowledge and expertise. Finally, he is studying the changes that will affect his position if the new handbook changes are adopted at the 2025 District Convention.

1. Treasurer’s Report: Mr. Rick Marko

Mr. Rick Marko, District Treasurer, provided a financial summary for the third quarter ended September 30, 2023. The change in assets for the quarter were $(321,813) compared to a budget of $(184,004), under budget by $137,809. The change in assets for the nine months ended September 30 was $(62,722) compared to a budget of $(308,320) over budget by $245,598. Congregational support was $445,340 for the nine months ended September 30, as compared to a budget of $512,496 or $67,256 under budget. Congregational support for the nine months ended September 30 was $1,355,465 as compared to a budget of $1,537,488 or $182,023 under budget. Through September there were 168 congregations (72% of total District congregations) making gifts ranging from $75 to $102,000. District expenses for the third quarter were under budget by $48,280. Expenses for the nine months ended September 30 were under budget by $281,985. Operating investments as of September 30 were $2,646,913 and Endowment invests were $3,844,255. The District continues to pay its bills in a timely manner.

1. Finance Committee Report

Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, Kai Larson, and Josh Wagner mentioned that the Finance Committee is attempting to clarify the state of current congregational giving and allocating our resources in the best possible way.

d) LCEF Report and Delinquent Loan Report

Mr. Kai Larson, LCEF District Vice President, reported investments are totaling $91,444,235 as of September 30, 3023. This includes $717,982 in new money; and $287,463 in refinanced loans with LCEF. Kai has been had loan discussions and closings with several congregations. In addition, the District LCEF “Real Estate Solutions” group is working with several District congregations. Finally, he reported there are currently no impaired or troubled LCEF loans in the Minnesota South District.

e) Special Reports

There were no special reports.

1. Other committee minutes: Schools & Commissioned Ministers; Ministerial Health; Mission Formation; Missions; Pre-Seminary Committee

**7. INFORMATION AND DECISION ITEMS**

1. 2024 Budget Approval

Mr. Rick Marko, Treasurer, gave us a brief overview of the proposed 2024 budget. 29.8% of the 2024 budget is for salaries; 9.3% is for benefits; 25.1% is for synod support; and 17.6% is for district missions programs. A motion was moved and seconded to adopt the 2024 budget. The motion carried.

1. Constitution Committee – Constitutions for approval

It was moved and seconded to accept the constitution of First English Lutheran Church, Spring Valley, in Fillmore County. The motion carried.

1. Regional Theological Convocations plan for 2024

Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford presented his plan to have a theological convocation in each four regions of the district in 2024. The first one will take place in March.

1. Funding the mission and donor appeal conversation

Ms. Nadine Meyer, Communications Director for the District, highlighted how each month congregations will have opportunities to publicize and support Minnesota South District missions. This will be located on the District website, in the Lutheran Witness Supplement, the weekly District E-News, and on the District Facebook site.

1. Circuit realignment rational for decision to pause district study and await results from Synod committee from RESOLUTION to 9-06A *To Appoint Task Force to Evaluate Current Electoral Circuit Parameters*

Rev. Stefan Wismar, Executive Assistant to the President, reported that:

i. The LCMS in convention determines electoral circuit criteria. These are likely to change given this resolution. It does not seem to make sense to spend the time and effort to realign according to what will most likely be a standard that no longer applies.

ii. The distinction between electoral and visitation circuits gives the MNS District the ability to make special arrangements for a circuit that has fallen below electoral qualifications without having to realign.

iii. Any realignment would most likely mean less electoral circuits at the synodical convention.

iv. If current circuits fall below electoral circuit qualifications the MNS BOD will join them to another visitation circuit to make one electoral circuit. This will also mean less electoral votes.

v. Therefore, either way the MNS District will have less electoral representation at the next synodical convention.

vi. Conclusion: Given the unknown outcome of the task force of Res. 9-06A of the 2023 LCMS Convention and that there is already a system in place to accommodate for visitation circuits that no longer meet electoral circuit qualification to be represented at the LCMS, Convention realignment is not recommended at this time.

1. LWML has suggested these names for nomination as Pastoral Counselor for the MNS District LWML. Seeking approval before being placed on ballot:
2. Rev. Craig McCourt – Peace Lutheran, Arlington
3. Rev. Martin Schoenfeld – Rose of Sharon, Cottage Grove
4. Rev. Lowell Sorenson – Immanuel Lutheran, Red Wing

A motion was made and seconded to nominate these three names. The motion carried.

1. **ROUND TABLE** Celebrations and/or prayer requests were shared.
2. **CLOSING PRAYER**

Rev. Kurt Klaus, who served as the chaplain for the day, led us in our closing prayer.

1. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:08pm.

Next BOD meeting is Saturday, February 17, 2024 @ 9:00 am at the MN South District

ffice (Zoom alternative for inclement weather). Chaplain for the day is Rev. Matthew Johnson.

Chaplain Schedule

* February 17, 2024  (Rev. Matthew Johnson will be the chaplain)
* May 7, 2024  (Rev. Jonathan Vollrath will be the chaplain)
* September 16-17, 2024  (Rev. Eric Nelson will be the chaplain)
* December 10, 2024  (Rev. David Mumme will be the chaplain)
* February 15, 2025  (Rev. Tom Evans will be the chaplain)
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