

Minutes: **Board of Directors Fall Meeting & Ministry Experience** – Board approved 12/12/2023
Minnesota South (MNS) District
September 25-26, 2023
Concordia University
St. Paul, MN

Mission Statement

Cultivating leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God.

Monday, September 25

1. WELCOME TO THE MINNESOTA SOUTH DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich, President of Concordia University St. Paul, greeted the BOD to campus. The theme of the 2023-24 academic year is: “I have called you by name.” CSP is celebrating the largest student enrollment in its history. President Friedrich reported on the relationship between Concordia University, the LCMS and the Concordia University System. In addition, he described how the CSP Board of Regents is designed. Finally, President Friedrich shared information on the mission, vision, goals, and promise statement of the university.

2. SESSION 1: “COMMUNITY AND BELONGING IN LUTHERAN EDUCATION”

Mychal Thom, Chief Diversity Officer at Concordia University, shared information on how CSP serves their vastly diverse population. He shared how his personal family journey has dramatically shaped how he views the student body at CSP. He shared the University’s Diversity Plan. Its goals are: to foster the retention and graduation rates for diverse students; strengthen curriculum and instruction; and make sure the student climate is exceptional. He is primarily at CSP so that “Christ is honored, all are welcome, and our Lutheran convictions inform our decision making.” For this to happen effectively, we have to regularly wrestle with this tension. It is projected that the United States population will become “minority white” in 2045. So how can we interact with Christ’s grace and love toward all people?

We recessed for chapel. Following chapel, the BOD was led on a campus tour.

3. SESSION 2: “ENVISIONING A FUTURE FOR AND WITH THE NEXT GENERATION”

Rev. Dr. Samuel Deressa, Associate Professor of Theology, spoke on global Christianity, migration, and helping second generation Christians become actively involved in the Christian community. There is a “silent exodus” of second generation immigrants who are leaving the church. The Great Commission commands us to reach and disciple all ethnic groups. Are we doing this? Surprisingly, currently 91% of new Christians per day come from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Subsequently there is a “reverse in missions” where countries from the south and east are sending more missionaries to the west.

Churches that create a multicultural setting where everyone feels connected and at home is crucial today. This requires a commitment to both existing and new forms of church.

We recessed for a break.

4. SESSION 3: “FROM CHALLENGE TO OPPORTUNITIES”

Rev. Dr. Mark Koschmann, Associate Vice President of Faith and Ministry, shared several challenges that are facing Christian universities including: higher education complexities; how religion is viewed in America; and cultural shifts. Then we inductively looked at Jacob Smith’s article “The Subjective Power of an Objective Gospel.” This article highlighted that the objective gospel is the only message that has the power to absolve us, sustain us, and keep us coming back to Christ.

We recessed for a break.

5. SESSION 4: “LEARNING TO LOVE THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS”

Rev. Dr. Reed Lessing, Professor of Theology and Ministry at Concordia University, gave a presentation on the Old Testament book of Lamentations. This book reminds us that we don’t ignore the pain of our past, nor leave it destroy us. God wants us to acknowledge and give a sacred understanding to groaning and pain. The Lord at times is “slow to speak” and “slow to answer.” Lamentations not only teaches us to confess evil, lament evil, and protest evil, but also to trust the Lord and His victory. In addition, this Biblical book teaches we survive trauma these four ways: tears, talk, time, and Torah.

We recessed for social hour with President Brian and Laurie Friedrich.

Tuesday, September 26

1. OPENING PRAYER

Rev. Keith Grimm, Pastor of Family of Christ Lutheran Church in Ham Lake and District Secretary, is serving as chaplain for the day. He opened the meeting with prayer.

2. PARLIAMENTARY OBLIGATIONS

a) The meeting was called to order by the President, Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford, at 8:40am.

b) Roll Call

Present: Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford; Rev. David Mumme; Rev. Thomas Evans; Rev. David Kind; Rev. Mark Loder; Rev. Keith Grimm Mr. Rick Marko; Rev. Kurt Klaus; Mr. Daniel Thao; Ms. Alfrieda Baldwin; Rev. Matthew Johnson; Mr. Bill Summers; Mr. Travis Barclay; Rev. Jonathan Vollrath; Mr. David Koosman; Mr. Daniel Uttech; Mr. Andy Frerich

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

Excused: Rev. David Kind; Ms. Sara Sorenson; Mr. Dave Kenow; Rev. Eric Nelson; Mr. Joel Landskroener; Mr. Sean Martens; Rev. Fred Hinz

c) Approval of Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda for the day. The motion carried.

d) Correspondence

Rev. Keith Grimm, District Secretary, shared correspondence from Synod Secretary, Dr. John Sias, asking for nominations to fill the vacant Ordained/Commissioned position on the Board for National Mission representing the Central Region. Secondly, nominations are being asked to fill the vacant Layperson position on the Board for International Mission representing the Great Lakes Region.

e) Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

President Woodford established the following dates for future Board of Directors meetings:

- December 12, 2023
- February 17, 2024
- May 7, 2024
- September 16-17, 2024
- December 10, 2024
- February 15, 2025
- May 6, 2025
- June 2025 - District Convention

3. INTRODUCTION OF JOSHUA WAGNER, NEW BUSINESS MANAGER

Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford introduced Joshua Wagner as the new Business Manager for the Minnesota South District. Joshua shared details about his family, education, professional career and missionary background.

4. VISIONING / STUDY ITEMS / PRESENTATIONS

a) Review use of Teams App:

Debbie Borchardt, Administrative Assistant for President Woodford, gave the BOD tips on utilizing Microsoft Teams files, posts, and calendar.

b) Mission Emphasis in MN South

Rev. Vue Lee, Missions Executive, gave a presentation on the current status and future goals of Minnesota South District missions. He emphasized the importance of life together, soul care, outreach, and collaboration with resurrection confidence. In addition, Vue accented the importance of long-term investing in people like you do with your family. We are free to *Go First!*

5. POLICY FORMATION

a) Governance Committee updates and discussion

Rev. Matthew Johnson led the presentation on the proposed handbook and governance changes. There was extensive conversation.

b) Proposed next steps

The Governance Committee is tasked with producing a timeline of the governance change proposals in the District Handbook for public communication within the District. In addition, the Governance Committee will produce a timeline of proposed changes to the Handbook and Bylaws to be submitted for Synod review (Committee on Constitutional Matters).

6. REPORTS

a) District President's Report Highlights, Q & A

Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford presented his report of activities from May through September 2023. President Woodford also highlighted how the *Go First!* initiative is creating excitement in his interactions with church workers and congregations. In addition, he mentioned he is shepherding and guiding several people and churches through the reconciliation process. Finally, President Woodford reported on some decisions made at the LCMS Synod Convention.

We recessed for chapel and lunch.

b) Staff Reports:

- Rev. Stefan Wismar, Executive Assistant to the President
Stefan has received training to be more objective and effective as he works with churches and individuals who are in conflict. He is also working on the initial stages of District-wide circuit realignment.
- Dr. Phil Johnson, Mission Formation Executive
Phil is working with several congregations to collaborate and partner with one another. He also mentioned that in April 2023 we hope to have a District "Go First" Conference that will offer multiple mission and ministry ideas and support.
- Mrs. Nadine Meyer, Communications Director
Nadine enjoys publicizing District events and activities through social media and various publications. Please pass along to her inspiring ministry and mission stories and events.

c) Treasurer's Report

Mr. Rick Marko District Treasurer, provided a financial summary for the second quarter ended June 30, 2023. The change in net assets for the quarter was \$115,053 compared to a budget of \$35,696, over budget by \$79,357. The change in net assets for the six months ended June 30 was \$259,091, over budget by \$383,407. Congregational support was \$447,006 for the three months ended June 30, as compared to a budget of \$512,496 or \$65,490 under budget. Congregational support for the six months ended June 30 was \$910,125 compared to a budget of \$1,024,992, or \$114,867 under budget. Through June there were 155 congregations (67% of total District congregations) making gifts ranging

from \$100 to \$72,000. The net gain on investments for the quarter was \$27,386. The net gain on investments year to date was \$139,317. In addition, District expenses for the second quarter were under budget by \$110,823. The District continues to pay its bills in a timely manner.

d) Finance Committee Report

Mr. Kai Larson, LCEF District Vice President, asked the Board to review the recent Finance Committee minutes. The Committee approved a \$50,000 line of credit to Samaritan's Hill in Albertville; and a loan of \$55,829 to St. Peter Lutheran Church in St. Paul for parsonage repairs. In addition, the 2024 preliminary budget was approved and will be presented to the BOD. Finally, the Finance Committee approved a \$2,000 payment be given the District Treasurer for the 2024 fiscal year in lieu of a raise.

e) LCEF Report and Delinquent Loan Report

Mr. Kai Larson, LCEF District Vice President, reported there are 3,803 investors who have invested \$92,630,334. Kai has been having loan discussions with several congregations. Finally, he reported there are currently no impaired or troubled LCEF loans in the Minnesota South District.

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

There were no reports.

7. INFORMATION AND DECISION ITEMS:

a) Budget draft

Mr. Rick Marko, Treasurer, gave us a brief overview of the proposed 2024 budget. There is a 3% salary increase to District employees. The projected revenue is approximately \$2.6 million. The budget will be discussed and adopted at the December BOD meeting.

b) Unpacking Convention Resolutions

Dr. Phil Johnson, Mission Formation Executive, shared several resolutions that passed at LCMS Synod Convention that will impact our District in the next triennium.

c) State of MN South Circuits

Rev. Stefan Wismar, Executive Assistant to the President, reported that our current circuit number (24) in the Minnesota South District may have to be realigned due to the criteria laid out in the 2019 LCMS Handbook.

d) Constitution Committee – Constitutions for approval

It was moved to accept the constitutions of these three congregations:

- Immanuel Lutheran Church, Gaylord
- Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Mound
- St. James Lutheran Church, West St. Paul

In addition, St. James Lutheran Church in West St. Paul was officially welcomed to the District and assigned to Circuit 4 (SE Suburban Circuit). Finally, Cornerstone Light of Life, which is worshipping at CSP, was assigned to Circuit 3 (St. Croix River Circuit).

The motion carried.

e) Reappointment of Reconcilers

It was moved and seconded that the following people be reappointed as reconcilers:

- i. Kristine Hanson
- ii. Thomas Hanson
- iii. Rev. Mark Loder
- iv. Dr. Phillip Johnson
- v. Rev. Stefan Wismar

The motion carried.

f) LCMS Board for National Missions and Board for International Missions Nominations

No nominations were submitted.

8. ROUND TABLE: Celebrations and/or prayer requests

9. CLOSING PRAYER: Chaplain Rev. Keith Grimm led the closing prayer.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by President Woodford at 2:53pm.

UPCOMING BOARD MEETING

December 12, 2023, at 9:00am (Rev. Kurt Klaus is the chaplain)