

To Memorialize the Sixty-ninth Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

“To Affirm the Exclusive Use of Synod’s Seminaries to Prepare Men for the Office of the Holy Ministry”

WHEREAS, The Pastors’ Conference of the Mid-South District, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in regular session of the District Conference, desires the Synod, Districts, Circuits, and congregations of the Synod reaffirm all the teachings of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions as expressed in the *Book of Concord*, and practiced in agreement with these symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; and

WHEREAS, The Pastors’ Conference of the Mid-South District, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod wishes to memorialize the Sixty-ninth Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod “To Affirm the Exclusive Use of the Synod’s Seminaries to Prepare Men for the Office of the Holy Ministry”; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has created certain means to train, prepare, and assign men into ministries of the Synod in an orderly and agreed-upon process; and

WHEREAS, The Lord Christ has called His Church to a unity of faith in what is taught, preached, and confessed, by which it fully embraces the call of “continuing steadfast in the apostles’ teaching,” that is, all the teachings of Holy Scripture and the Evangelical Lutheran standards expressed in the *Book of Concord* (John 17:20–21; Ephesians 4:4–6; Acts 2:42; Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration X:31); and

WHEREAS, Article III of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod reflects our Lord’s will by stating that “the Synod...shall...conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3–6; 1 Cor. 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy”; and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod provide for the two recognized seminaries of Synod—Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL); and

WHEREAS, The establishment of the two recognized seminaries of Synod, to the exclusion of other seminaries, were formed to educate, form, and train the pastors of Synod (Bylaws 2.7, 2.8); and

WHEREAS, The Bylaws of Synod provide for the possibility of a pastor from another unrelated church body to emerge from another confession and provide a means by which a pastor may join, by examination and by his agreement in doctrine and practice, with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

WHEREAS, A man from another church body, wishing to serve in the ministerium of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod may do so, providing such a man is certified and received into the ordained membership of the Synod via the colloquy program (Bylaw 3.10.2); and

WHEREAS, Through the exclusive use of its two seminaries and by His grace alone, the Lord has for nearly 180 years preserved the true confession of His Word and practice in accord with Holy Scripture in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

WHEREAS, The education, formation, and training of pastors are best accomplished by in-person, face-to-face, live, and in a residential setting, as the history of our two seminaries and Synod demonstrate; and

WHEREAS, The dangers of educating, forming, and training men for the possible ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in seminaries outside the approval, oversight, and support of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and that are associated with heterodox groups, risks confusion, and unnecessary and difficult division; and

WHEREAS, The Center for Missional and Pastoral Leadership, an unauthorized online seminary under the umbrella of the Institute for Lutheran Theology (Brookings, SD) affiliated with the heterodox North American Lutheran Church, has offered coursework to students from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations leading to the Master of Arts in Religion, the Master of Ministry, or

a Master of Divinity, the latter two of which are widely recognized as requisite education and formation for the pastorate; and

WHEREAS, Unite Leadership Collective (Sioux Falls Baptist Seminary) directs and facilitates the enrollment of students from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations in Master of Arts and Master of Divinity programs of another online seminary, namely, Luther House of Study; and

WHEREAS, The plea to enroll students from leaders of Unite Leadership Collective and the Center for Missional and Pastoral Leadership has allegedly been given in response to the pastor shortage in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, indicating that both entities wish to use their respective seminary programs to educate, form, and train pastors for ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

WHEREAS, The Council of Presidents at its April 2025 meeting issued a clear statement on non-Synodical seminaries, stating,

“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. We commit ourselves to engage the Church, our members agree not to ordain graduates from other programs. We commit ourselves to engage the Church and the Synod’s seminaries, and Pastoral Formation Committee, to strengthen the routes to ordination and address challenges and opportunities for providing the Church with well-formed candidates for the pastoral ministry.”

WHEREAS, The Conditions of Membership (Article VI) require all members of Synod, both rostered workers and congregations, to reject “the renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every sort” and the “regular call of pastors” (as defined in the Bylaws of Synod, 2.7, 2.8); therefore, be it

WHEREAS, The faculties of the LCMS Seminaries have the responsibility to certify graduates for eligibility for placement and ordination and would have no provision for certifying non-LCMS seminary graduates (Bylaws 2.8.1 (a), 2.8.1 (c), and 3.10.5.7.10 (h)); and

WHEREAS, LCMS Colloquy is only for those who are already ordained and have served in another church body; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Synod gathered in convention be encouraged to rise and sing the *Te Deum* in thankfulness to the Lord for His gracious preservation of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and for the faithful ministry of the nine generations of graduates to the congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, through whom, as “fellow workers” (1 Corinthians 3:9), the Lord has preserved the faith among us; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod gathered in convention is called upon to affirm the residential M.Div. education, formation, and training of the future pastorate of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as the standard within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the non-residential and online tracks toward ordination be utilized only to the extent that is consistent with their design, purpose, and consistency with the doctrines, confession, and unity provided by the faculty from the authorized seminaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations and rostered workers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod pray with heartfelt fervor and regularity to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His harvest (Matthew 9:38); and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations and rostered workers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod vigorously pursue recruitment of able and apt men for the pastorate of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1), under the Synod’s *Set Apart to Serve* initiative, and encourage and support prospective students to apply for the residential M.Div. at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, or Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; and be it further

Resolved, That the congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and their members generously support the work of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in providing a theologically rich, residential M.Div. education, formation, and training for the future pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That pastors, congregations, and officials of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod encourage men interested in ministry to seek theological education, formation, and training in one of the recognized ministry tracks for the pastoral office at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, or Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; and be it further

Resolved, That the District Presidents with ecclesiastical oversight over the congregations and rostered workers advocating for, recruiting for, or teaching in Luther House of Study and the Center for Missional and Pastoral Leadership admonish those congregations and rostered workers for placing their own and the Synod's faithfulness to Holy Scripture, the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Holy things of God in jeopardy; for breaking unity and fraternity by intentionally working against the Synod and its seminaries to recruit and train pastors, which harms unity by militating against all things and order (1 Corinthians 14:40); and for inviting false doctrine from and ecclesial association with heterodox church bodies, which militates against the Lord's will that the Church be kept in unity of faith and Confession (Romans 16:17); and be it further

Resolved, That, unless the congregations and rostered workers advocating for, recruiting for, teaching in, and receiving church workers from Luther House of Study and the Center for Missional and Pastoral Leadership heed the admonition of the District President under whose ecclesial supervision they stand, such rostered workers be subject to the application of Bylaw 2.13.2, as having violated the conditions of membership (Article VI); and be it further

Resolved, That District Presidents follow their ecclesiastical responsibility in the processes surrounding Bylaw 2.13.2; and be it finally

Resolved, That, if a District President fails to fulfill the Bylaws' duty on behalf of the Synod toward those who persist in advocating for, recruiting for, teaching in, and employing as church workers graduates from Luther House of Study and the Center for Missional and Pastoral Leadership, the President of Synod exercise his duty under Article XIII and Bylaw 2.15.

Signatures

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, President

Rev. Larry Peters, Secretary