

OFFICE OF THE FIRST VICE PRESIDENT  
Rev. Nolan D. Astley

December 13, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace mercy and peace to you in the Name of Christ,

At the 11<sup>th</sup> Convention of Lutheran Church – Canada (LCC), held on October 13-16, 2017 in Kitchener, Ontario, amendments to the Constitution of LCC were adopted. These amendments were supported by a large majority the delegates. According to Article XIV, Part 4 of the 2014 Constitution of LCC, these amendments are now sent to each LCC congregation for ratification. This Article reads as follows:

*“Proposed amendments to the Constitution adopted by a Convention shall be submitted directly to each congregation that is a member of the Synod on an official ballot, and the congregations shall by official action express their affirmative or negative vote and indicate the same to the secretary of Lutheran Church-Canada on this official ballot. The proposed amendment shall become effective at the expiration of six months from the date on which the amendment was adopted by a Convention, provided a two-thirds majority of the votes cast by congregations within that period shall have favored the amendment. At the end of the six-month period the secretary of Lutheran Church-Canada shall announce the outcome of the voting by districts in the official periodicals of the Synod.”*

As you no doubt know, these Constitutional Amendments are part of a larger package of changes to our Synodical structure that has been undertaken in response to resolutions passed at all 3 District Conventions in 2015 asking the Commission on Constitutional Matters and Structure to develop restructuring proposals to be set before the 2017 Convention.

### **1. Summary of Structural Changes**

The key elements of the restructuring proposal as put forward by CCMS and adopted by the Convention are as follows:

- a. LCC will interact directly with each Member Congregation, pastor and deacon on all ecclesiastical matters, replacing their current interactions with one of the three Districts.
- b. Many ecclesiastical activities will be carried on by Regional Pastors and Regional Mission and Ministry Councils established within the Bylaws of LCC, replacing many of the ecclesiastical activities currently carried on by separately incorporated Districts.
- c. Synodical Conventions will move from a 3 year to a 4 year cycle.
- d. Every congregation or parish of the Synod will be represented at Convention as opposed to having representatives from the Circuits.
- e. The historic practice of each congregation or parish having 2 votes, (one being its pastor and one vote being cast by a duly elected layperson) is retained.
- f. Each region will be represented on the Board of Directors of Synod by either a pastor or layperson elected within each of the Regions, plus one Deacon elected at large.

- g. The President will be elected at Convention and an Administrator appointed (hired) by the Board of Directors.
- h. One Vice President instead of the 3 current Vice Presidents.
- i. Having the following titles for the leadership within LCC:
  - i. Ecclesiastical /Spiritual Leader – President
  - ii. Administrator of LCC – Administrator
  - iii. Spiritual Leader of a Region – Regional Pastor
  - iv. Spiritual Leader of a Circuit – Circuit Counselor

Many of these changes were implemented via amendments to the Statutory Bylaws which were amended by a 77% majority (2/3rds required) and amendments to the Synodical Bylaws which require a simple majority and which passed without opposition.

Under the new structure, congregations will relate directly to synod, with congregations grouped in three regions, the boundaries of which have been determined by the Board of Directors and which will for the time-being follow the boundaries of the current districts. Delegates to the 2017 synodical convention have requested the 3 district corporations to make opportunity for the election of regional pastors and circuit counsellors during their 2018 conventions. A separate resolution was adopted by the Convention stating LCC will begin offering the ecclesiastical services currently provided by Districts directly to its Members as of January 1, 2019

## **2. Rationale for Structural Changes**

The structure we took with us into our life as a self-governing church in 1988 was a close copy of what we knew in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, a church body many, many times our size. There were likely compelling reasons to do it, but early on in our brief history, people began to sense it wasn't working as well as we needed it to. While one could list several reasons for changing the structure there are three that stand out.

### **a. Reduction of Administrative Burden**

The most basic change of the current restructuring proposals is that we will streamline and operate with one administrative structure. At the present time, our three Districts—in addition to LCC itself—are corporate entities. Our entire church in Canada is only slightly larger than the Missouri Synod's Iowa District West. And yet, small as we are, we carry the burden of four separate corporate structures. Each needs to have its own CEO, its own Board of Directors, its own schedule of conventions, its own financial and budget structure, its own Handbook and bylaws, its own set of committees or departments to populate, its own policy and procedures manuals, and on it goes.

By reducing our "administrative footprint" it is anticipated that as a church body we will save \$400,000 per year in administrative costs and that over a 12 year period LCC will save nearly \$500,000 in convention costs by holding a single convention every four years.

### **b. Better Use of Human Resources**

Restructuring isn't just a matter of money and meeting time. In LCC we often struggle to identify the necessary human resources to fill the slate for not just 1 but 4 corporate structures. Taking pastors away from parishes to fill administrative positions can have a negative impact on congregations. The highest calling for an ordained servant of God is to be a parish pastor and we seek to reduce the amount of time pastors are out of the parish on administrative work.

Another important consideration in the restructuring proposals set forward was to lift the at least some

of the administrative burden from our ecclesiastical supervisors. In the survey conducted by the CCMS at the beginning of their work, nearly 40% of the pastors who responded to the survey indicated they do not feel they are adequately supported by district and synod. This number is of great concern and it is hoped that Regional Pastors who are freed from having to serve as CEO of a corporation, will allow for more time in the field caring for members and building community in our synod.

### **c. Changed Environment of Synodical Operation**

The crisis involving the Church Extension Fund of the ABC District has had profound impact on the lives of many members of our congregations in the ABC District and has beyond. It has also changed the environment in which LCC itself operates. In the wake of the crisis, mission remittances from congregations have declined significantly as trust in our structures was lost. LCC needs to live within her means and the simple fact is that costs must be contained so as many dollars as possible are used for the core work of the Synod, missions, and formation of church workers.

In addition LCC has experienced greater difficulty obtaining liability insurance for its officers and directors in the wake of the CEF crisis. While this has been solved for the moment, permanent solutions will come only as the LCC's operations are streamlined.

## **3. The Changes You Are Asked to Consider**

The Convention just completed sent a strong message to the membership of its support for restructuring. Needing a 2/3rds majority to be adopted, the constitutional changes now being sent to congregations for ratification were approved by a 92% majority of delegates. The highlights of the changes are as follows:

### **a. Titling and Nomenclature**

If adopted, the title of the constitution will be changed to "Synodical Constitution." This change reflects the decision to remove virtually all provisions which deal with the corporate life of LCC to the Statutory Bylaws. LCC as a corporation is established by a 1959 Special Act of the Senate of Canada. Its structure is detailed in the Statutory Bylaws which were first adopted in accordance with the Act. At the time of the Statutory Bylaws were adopted, it was determined to leave some elements of corporate structure in the Constitution, realizing there would likely come a time when the issue of structure would be further addressed. Now that we have addressed these matters, it is appropriate for the corporate matters to be contained in the Statutory Bylaws so the Synodical Constitution can focus on our life together in Christ.

It will also be noticed that throughout the Synodical Constitution expressions like, "The Synod," "Synod" are replaced with "Lutheran Church – Canada" and "LCC." Lutheran Church – Canada is the body established by the 1959 Act and so these changes are made for sake of consistency in the documents.

### **b. Article I Status and Definitions**

A number of definitions are deleted from the Constitution as they have already been defined in the Statutory Bylaws. Previously definitions were included in both documents and this change is made for sake of clarity and uniformity throughout the Handbook.

### **c. Article II Confession**

This article is unchanged with the exception of the addition of a reference to the document known as "The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope." The Treatise is a document in the 1580 Book of Concord which was thought to be an appendix to the Smalcald Articles. However, more recently, The Treatise is considered to be a stand-alone document composed by Luther before he wrote the Smalcald

Articles. Our current liturgical texts used at ordinations and installations of pastors as well as at consecrations and installation of deacons identify The Treatise as a separate document and we are aligning the Synodical Constitution to reflect this.

**d. Article III Objectives**

Unchanged

**e. Article IV (Previous) Rights of Conventions**

Moved to Article VIII

**f. Article IV (Proposed) Prerequisites to Membership**

This article addresses how congregations and individuals become members of LCC. The term “community of believers” is used to signify congregations who while gathered around Word and Sacrament are not yet formally members of the Synod. In the Statutory Bylaws “Member Congregation” is a defined term to referring to congregations who are gathered around Word and Sacrament and which have been received into membership in LCC.

Because we are moving to a 4 year convention cycle, the Board of Directors will be authorized to receive new members between conventions. For Congregations the Board of Directors will assume the duty of examining the constitution of proposed members to insure they contain nothing contrary to the Scriptures and Confessions.

New congregational and individual members will continue to be formally welcomed into LCC at a Convention.

**g. Article V Additional Conditions of Membership**

The changes to this article relate to nomenclature and wording updates.

**h. Article VI Termination of Membership**

The material in this article was previously located at Article XIII and has been brought forward to follow provisions concerning becoming a member of LCC. Other changes relate to nomenclature and wording updates.

**i. Article VII Relation of the Synod to Congregations**

Changes to this article relate to nomenclature and wording updates. The understanding of the LCC as advisory to its member congregations is unchanged.

**j. Article VIII Conventions**

The provisions of this article have been moved to the Statutory Bylaws.

**k. Article VIII Rights of Conventions**

In this Article we restate the provisions of the previous Article IV and emphasize that just as the Convention is the paramount decision-making authority for LCC as a corporation so also it is the primary decisions-making authority on ecclesiastical matters.

## **I. Article IX (previous) Representation**

The provisions of this article have been moved to the Statutory Bylaws and Synodical Bylaws.

## **m. Article IX (proposed) Ecclesiastical Functions of Officers**

Officers of LCC have responsibility to manage the corporate affairs and ecclesiastical life of LCC. Their corporate responsibilities are defined in the Statutory Bylaws and their ecclesiastical responsibilities are further defined in the Synodical Bylaws.

## **n. Article X Ecclesiastical Authority of the President**

This article continues the historic understanding of the President as being the person ultimately responsible for supervision of the doctrine and life of members of LCC. He also has the duty to promote and maintain unity in doctrine and practice.

NOTE – in the draft of the Synodical Constitution presented to the Convention there was an error at the end of Article X 3 referring to the doctrine and practice of “districts.” The word “districts” should have been “regions.” This error will be corrected by the CCMS in the final draft of the Synodical Constitution.

The material added to this Article at point #4 arises from work done by the CCMS to identify the ecclesiastical services provided to members by LCC and charges the President with managing the delivery of those services. The previous provision of point #4 is moved to the Statutory Bylaws.

## **o. Article XII Districts and Their Regulation**

This entire section is deleted. The division of LCC into regions is introduced in the Statutory Bylaws and detailed in the Synodical Bylaws.

## **p. Article XIII Expulsion from the Synod**

The provisions of this Article have been moved to Article VI as noted at point h. above.

## **q. Article XI Amendments to the Constitution**

The amending formula for the Synodical Constitution remains unchanged. The amendments to this article relate to nomenclature and wording updates.

## **Conclusion**

Over the past 2 ½ years an enormous amount of time and effort have gone into developing the proposals for structural change in LCC and also to presenting those changes in a way that they can be implemented and become reality for the Synodical family. As important as this task has been, no one in the leadership of LCC is under any illusion that structures, constitutions, or bylaws to ever accomplish what only God can do by His Word and Holy Spirit. We seek only to be better stewards of the resources of time, talent and treasure entrusted to LCC by the people who make up her member congregations.

Great care has been taken so that in proposing changes we do not change what must not change in the Synod; that is, our confession of Christ, His inerrant Word, our subscription to the Lutheran confessional writings, and the clear objectives for which the Synod was created to begin with.

The Board of Directors of LCC, together with the CCMS, urges member congregations to give prayerful

consideration to these amendments and exercise their right to vote on or before April 16, 2018. Ballots may be returned by email or via Canada Post. If ballots are being returned by mail they must be postmarked no later than April 17, 2018. Should you have questions or need clarification on the proposed changes to the Constitution you may contact the undersigned at the email address in the letterhead and answers will be provided as quickly as possible.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. John Bell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

First Vice President  
Lutheran Church – Canada