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Dear Fellow Tampa Delegate,

I hope you are looking forward to serving Christ Jesus and our beloved Synod in Tampa next week. I've had five generations of *Muellers* and *Pranges* and *Steinkamps* and *Hasenjaegers* and *Scherers* (and so many others) go before me as a part of the LCMS — and now two generations of LCMS members follow me in my 8 children and 9 grandchildren.

God has blessed me to serve His church as a pastor, worker supervisor, district leader on boards and district-wide mission efforts, a board member for our LCMS District and Congregational Services and Communication Services boards, a university board member, Army chaplain, doctrinal reviewer, short-term missionary to Uganda, Guatemala, and of late to Ghana. I've been a delegate to four conventions and attended three others.

**In other words, I've got history and perspective. Others do, too. Both are valuable – everyone has something to bring to the table in the LCMS.**

As a delegate you will be responsible to hear the experience, concerns and thanksgivings of sisters and brothers in Christ from all across the nation. While we may not always agree as our LCMS family, I'm going to Tampa to help our LCMS survive AND THRIVE! How about you?

I hope you are going with the same anticipation of a *great* convention. We have some really tough issues to deal with. But with God's guidance and the good will and prayers of all, we *can* – and *will*.

**You see, together with lots of other people in the LCMS, I believe our Synod has lost its way.** No one tried to make it happen, but we've drifted off course into the trouble we see at every hand. Centralization of authority and rules, rules, rules always seems good to begin with. That course, however, grates against our "covenant of love" with one another we call the LCMS *and shows itself in anger, apathy and a lack of support for our beloved Synod which characterizes much of our fellowship.*

I believe centralization of authority is the wrong direction for our Synod. Walther did, too.

Has centralization of power and authority in Synod brought us to these struggling days? I think so. **Our forefathers thought congregations mattered.** According to Articles III and VII of our constitution, Synod's first responsibility is to *serve* congregations and assist them in *their* work for the Kingdom of God. Synod is and always has been an *advisory* body. **Congregations don't serve Synod. Synod serves congregations!**

In large measure, that's not happening now. Our leadership at every level seems to have lost their focus on their historic roles. **Instead, more and more power and decision-making responsibility is in the hands of fewer and fewer — with less and less opportunity for other voices to be heard.**

Our current leadership – the people we've elected to serve us from Synod President on down – bear some responsibility for this change of course. But others of us are responsible, too. We let it happen by our inaction, inattentiveness, and apathy. *It's time for all of us to change.*

So let's change – and change now. I believe we need a general change of leadership if we are to return our Synod to her rightful work of supporting and encouraging congregations and advance God's Kingdom here in the States and around the world.

**That's why when the leaders of Congregations Matter approached me and Trinity, Roselle, about sending out a list of leaders to give Synod a fresh start at unity, peace and growth, I agreed.**

Enclosed you will find the best effort of lots of people at putting together that list. You'll see lots of names not found on the United List over the past decade or so. New names. Great names. Great people that God has prepared for such a time as this. People ready to serve the Lord Jesus and His Church and advance the work of Christ among us and the nations.

**Please prayerfully consider this list as you vote for our leadership for the next three years. Ask yourself simple questions such as these:**

- *Is Synod better off now? Is there more unity of purpose, more peace and engagement than anger and apathy? Why did half of the LCMS ignore the election for Synod President?*
- *Are more adults coming to faith? Children being baptized? Schools growing?*
- *Is there more collaboration? More transparency? More trust?*
- *Why are decisions like selling property and closing Selma hidden from the rest of us? Why so many executive sessions in meetings?*
- *Why is the pool of names being offered for appointments and positions not reflective of broader Missouri? Why is only one "side" of the LCMS engaged?*

I'm thankful that more of "middle Missouri" made it into the pool of candidates we'll be electing this month in Tampa. And I'm thankful that Congregations Matter took the time to consider ALL the candidates and produce an alternative to the United List that's caused so much upheaval in our Synod.

Just so you know, none of the people recommended by Congregations Matter were asked whether or not they wanted to be included on the list. Some will be surprised that Congregations Matter is encouraging their election or re-election. The team that worked through this process asked for recommendations and evaluations of candidates from people across the U.S. The list I've enclosed reflects Congregations Matter's encouragement to get the LCMS back to its constitutional Article III and Article VII responsibilities of supporting congregations in their work for Jesus. **See you in Tampa!**

Together in His Service,



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