

What follows is the text and images copied from the November 23, 2022 emailed letter from Texas District President Michael Neuman to the Texas District regarding Concordia University Texas:



“Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:17)

Dear fellow servants of Jesus,

A blessed Thanksgiving week to you. We also stand on the threshold of the Advent season. How encouraging and uplifting it is to know our Savior draws near to us. May His presence restore you and lift you up as you give thanks and as you are filled with the hope of His coming!

Two weeks ago, I shared [a letter](#) from President Don Christian of Concordia University Texas (CTX) indicating that the CTX Board of Regents voted to adopt a structure whereby CTX is governed solely by its Board of Regents. The letter emphasized that the intention of the CTX Board of Regents was not to leave the LCMS but to remain in alignment with LCMS while reframing the governance structure.

After productive conversations last week with both LCMS President Harrison and the Council of Presidents, I would like to provide an update and answers to questions I’ve received.

Why did the CTX Board of Regents vote to be the sole governing entity on November 8th?

The Concordia University System (CUS) President, Rev. Dr. Dean Wenthe, disclosed that the CUS was bringing a resolution about CTX to the LCMS Board of Directors on November 18th. Neither the CUS President nor the CUS board chair would reveal what that resolution entailed. With no information revealed, and, understanding that the CUS might be recommending that CTX be closed or consolidated with another system university, the CTX Board of Regents wanted to prevent any possible demise of CTX. The only path forward was to vote for sole governance responsibility.

What precipitated this chain of events?

It all started with the CTX Board of Regents providing feedback about the proposed changes in university system governance by the Synod’s 7-03 task force between July 2020 and February 2021. You can read the proposed bylaws [here](#). The proposed bylaws change the historic relationship of the Synod’s schools to the LCMS, making the schools affiliated institutions that could be disaffiliated upon recommendation of an accreditation team formed by a newly created Commission for University Education. The creation of the accreditation team would alter the Synod’s system of ecclesiastical oversight. The proposed bylaws even stipulate that a Concordia University would be required to surrender the name “Concordia” if disaffiliated from the Synod.

The CTX Board of Regents, the Texas District Board of Directors, and the Texas District Convention provided feedback as requested by the 7-03 task force. Part of the feedback asked for more discussion Synodwide. No response was received.

In February of 2022, the CTX Board of Regents asked the LCMS Board of Directors to engage in a conversation that might lead to a new governance model. The LCMS Board of Directors indicated that the only conversation possible was through a current LCMS Bylaw that provided a path to separation (LCMS Handbook Bylaw 3.6.6.4.i). Rather than a separation, the CTX Board of Regents hoped to have a conversation that led to a reimagined relationship. The CTX Board of Regents wanted to meet personally with LCMS leaders to get to know one another and to talk about goals and ideas. After a second request for dialogue was denied, the CTX Board of Regents agreed to follow a process toward separation that was outlined by the LCMS Board. A proposal was submitted to the CUS president in July, whereupon the CUS and CTX would work together to create an acceptable proposal for the LCMS Board of Directors. The CUS president requested additional information from the CTX Board of Regents and the CTX Board of Regents complied, asking for a timely response. No response came. When President Don Christian reached out to the CUS president to inquire about any intent to engage in discussion, the CUS president mentioned the secret resolution being brought to the LCMS Board of Directors on November 18th. This news created alarm and urgency for the CTX Board of Regents. Knowing that three Concordias suffered closure in recent years, understanding its bylaw responsibility to govern and steward CTX, fearful of losing CTX, and desiring to preserve a position of conversation with the LCMS, the CTX Board of Regents acted.

The intent was to be able to continue to engage in conversation and to remain faithful to the mission of CTX and the mission of the LCMS.

Is this action permitted?

The LCMS bylaws require each university's board of regents to govern the institution within the general policies and broad assignments of the Synod. The board of regents is required to define and fulfill the mission of each institution and to develop policies for the institution. It is the "governing body corporate of the institution" (see LCMS bylaws section 3.10.6). Failing to act would have violated the bylaws and the board of regents' fiduciary responsibility to the institution and to the church.

When the CUS departed from the process directed by the LCMS Board of Directors and when it abandoned its requirement to coordinate "the activities of the Synod's colleges and universities as a unified system of the Synod through their respective boards of regents" (LCMS Bylaw 3.6.6.1), the CTX Board of Regents acted as responsibly as possible within the bylaws.

Is this a doctrinal issue?

The CTX Board of Regents and leadership team are committed to the confession of the LCMS. CTX is not leaving the LCMS. The CTX Board of Regents is seeking dialog about sound governance as the Synod reshapes its approach to its universities. This is a governance discussion.

It is important for you to know that CTX is not pursuing a progressive liberal agenda. Any rumors about such a desire are not true and try to use isolated incidents to discredit CTX's unwavering commitment to all the LCMS believes, teaches and confesses. Any questions regarding doctrinal fidelity at CTX should be sent to President Christian for investigation, review and solutions.

Will there be doctrinal oversight at CTX?

The current CTX bylaws require all board of regents members to be members in good standing in LCMS congregations. The CTX bylaws also require adherence to the Biblical and Confessional standards of the LCMS. An external review of the university's alignment with the LCMS will be conducted every three years. Finally, the board has seats reserved for a representative of the LCMS as well as from the Texas District.

In addition to oversight by the regents in this area, all called workers remain under the ecclesiastical oversight of the district president.

What are the next steps?

CTX remains committed to collegial dialog with the leaders of our beloved church. President Harrison has committed to this dialog. The LCMS Board of Directors is designating representatives to engage in conversation

with the CTX Board of Regents. I was encouraged by the spirit of President Harrison and the Council of Presidents in my meetings last week. While there is much work to be done and conversation to be had, I see a commitment to serve the church, the university, and all God's people as we move forward.

Dr. Don Christian (president@concordia.edu) and Dr. Kristi Kirk (provost@concordia.edu) welcome your questions. You can find additional CTX information and updates [here](#). I will do my best to keep you informed as we move forward. Please keep this process in your prayers.

Thanksgiving blessings to you,

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:19–20)

Michael W. Newman



Rev. Michael W. Newman, President
Texas District, LCMS